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IN DARKEST HUNGARY

by

G. PÁLÓCZY-HORVÁTH

With Introduction by
MICHAEL KÁROLYI

LONDON
VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD
1945

2:Paloczy-Horvath H-3 (no date)1944 EC1 Hungary EC1

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First published December 1944
Second impression January 1945

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY RICHARD CLAY AND COMPANY, LTD.,
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

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INTRODUCTION

PÁLÓCZY-HORVÁTH's historical work appears at the climax of Hungary's tragedy. Its approach is so new and so daring that the book defies all attempts at pedantic classification. One of its outstanding merits is the fact that it was written in collaboration with a Hungarian peasant. Penetrating into his world, into the ways of his life and thought, Pálóczy-Horváth unfolds before us the history of the disinherited Hungarian peasantry, thus shedding light upon a sombre landscape. Indeed, in this book the Chinese wall is blasted behind which the world of feudal Hungary lay hidden.

I sympathise deeply with the author's views. Nevertheless, on a few points I feel that I must dissent from them. Far from diminishing the merits of the book, this merely proves how wide are the perspectives opened up by it, and how full of pitfalls are Hungarian history and the Hungarian psyche.

In this country few are acquainted with Hungarian history, and those who are have had to draw on sources abounding with the prejudices of official Hungarian historians, as well as with the traditional commonplaces of the profession. In this war, which has been called by Henry Wallace the common man's war, the common man has, indeed, come to the fore. It is high time that we should concern ourselves with his history. For he, too, has a history. He may not have taken a hand in the shaping of his destiny, for politics, as the popular Hungarian saying has it, are "gentlemen's trickery"; but, for all that, it is the common man who is the living and suffering object of history. His name is not mentioned in the chronicles, his figure not painted on the walls of churches and palaces. In the background, he has always been stooping in the fields, marching on the battlefields. His form is emerging from history. "Nothing to-day, he will be everything to-morrow."

This is why I welcome Pálóczy-Horváth's book with deep satisfaction, for it is the true story of the common people of Hungary. It is not merely a scholar's recapitulation of laboriously collected material—it is a scholar's unfolding of the hidden recesses of his own people's soul. At last, after innumerable misleading analyses and pharisaic pretences, the common people tell, in their own tongue, what their history was like. The result, in this exciting book, will come as a revelation both to the Hungarian and to the English public.

To the English too—because this book, with its deep craving for

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free institutions, makes it clear that the traditions of the West have a permanent place in Hungarian life. Yesterday the West was Germany. To-morrow it will be England. She has become our nearest Western friend in a shrinking world. The Battle of Britain was also fought for liberty on the Danube.

566 When surveying Hungary's history, the reader must bear in mind her peculiar characteristics. The archaic social structure of the country has been preserved intact throughout the centuries, thus leaving the power in the hands of a small minority of nobles. The autonomy of the counties and their ancient hierarchy reinforced such a development. This unfortunate feature was only aggravated by the fact that, during the century and a half which witnessed vast progress in nearly all the European countries that benefited from the influence of Humanism, the Renaissance and the Reformation, Hungary, with an almost fossilised social structure, lay buried under the Turkish occupation. Apart from the brilliant episode of Matthias Corvinus, the Renaissance hardly touched the country, and ironically enough it was not so much the Reformation as the officially fostered Counter-Reformation which left its mark on the intellectual life of the Magyars. When Hungary re-emerged at the end of the seventeenth century her social structure was that of the fifteenth century. It might be said that what the Thirty Years' War was to Germany, the 150 years of Turkish occupation were to Hungary.

[671] Hungarian Law, as codified in the sixteenth century, has been based throughout on the Tripartite Code of Werbőczi, published in 1525, which in its turn was largely inspired by reaction to the peasant revolt, bloodily suppressed in 1514. It divided the Hungarian people into the castes of big and small nobility, with the clergy on the one hand, the plebs on the other. This fatal cleavage in the Hungarian social structure stamped its mark on centuries of history, and made the anti-democratic orientation a fundamental trait of Hungarian politics. This semi-feudal character of Hungarian society, occasionally tinted as it was with theocratic colours, represented a cul-de-sac of all Hungarian ccc endeavours. Mr. Pálóczy's vivid description of the relationship between master and serf is by no means an overstatement or exaggeration. I myself, who was brought up to be one of these masters, must blush at the way my own experiences confirm Mr. Pálóczy's description—experiences which induced me to leave that medieval atmosphere of feudal privilege.

The book puts its finger on the crucial point of modern Hungar-

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ian history in laying bare the roots of the catastrophe which overtook the country in 1918, and which, in almost identical form, has overwhelmed her again. Freeing history of its romantic trappings, the author reveals the real cause of these tragic events in the German orientation of Hungary's foreign policy and in the semi-feudal structure of her society. These two factors were, indeed, indissolubly linked. For without the help of the Germans it would have been impossible for Hungary's lords to maintain their anachronistic rule in modern times. No deeper insight into the natural history of the Hungarian oligarchy is possible.

The German connection is, of course, almost as old as Hungary herself. Ever since St. Stephen's time she has sought and found in the German world a welcome addition, if not a counter-weight, to the masses of her partly Slavonic subjects. This fact, as well as the frequent settlement of Germans in Hungary, served, in our epoch, as the stepping-stones of German power policy in that country.

After 1526, the contact became closer with the appearance of the Habsburgs on the Hungarian political scene. The otherwise risky method of marriage paid the Habsburgs well. However, for another 150 years the Turks disputed the new acquisition by occupying the greater part of Hungary, and making Transylvania tributary to themselves.

Hungary was now engaged in a fight on two fronts, against the Turks and the Habsburgs. Such a situation lent itself to much contradictory adulation on the part of later historians. While Hungary's struggle against the Turks was presented as a crusade in defence of Christian civilisation, her intermittent fights against the Habsburgs were similarly idealised, although they happened to be fought in military alliance with the self-same Turks, against whom at other times the alleged crusade was being waged. Dr. Goebbels was not the only propagandist who trod on his own toes.

Actually, victories over the Habsburgs were victories for feudalism. Three times Hungary made a solemn compact with the Habsburg dynasty, and on each occasion the big landowners gained some special privilege in exchange for the concessions made to the throne. In 1687, the Crown of St, Stephen was declared to be hereditary in the male line of the Habsburgs; the same Diet did not fail to enact the privilege of *fidei commissa* in favour of the Magyar peers of the realm. In 1723, the succession was extended to the female line; simultaneously, the right of entail was extended to the rest of the aristocracy. After 1867, when the famous "Compromise" drew the bonds between Hun-

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175 gary and Austria even closer, an Order in Council made the laws
566 on *fidei commissa* more effective. The Magyar oligarchy made nationalism pay. They never regarded Hungary as safe, unless they could feel sure of their dominion over the peasants. This was evident during the rule of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, whose enlightened absolutism was particularly against their interests.

The failure of the Josephinean experiment in Hungary is pregnant with significance. Joseph II introduced reforms as radical as those subsequently proposed and carried into effect by the Assemblies of the French Revolution. Serfdom was abolished and many aristocratic prerogatives were annulled once and for all. These daring innovations mark him out as one of the outstanding benefactors of mankind. He might have been wholly successful, but for the fact that his centralised method of administration involved the official use of *one* single language in his multilingual Empire. And the Emperor, though averse to nationalism in all its forms, for purely practical reasons chose German as the new *lingua franca* of the reformed Empire. This psychological blunder was to prove fatal to his plans. The common people of Hungary, who knew no Latin and cherished their native tongue, resented what they took to be the Emperor's attempt at deliberate Germanisation. Their genuinely patriotic sentiments were cleverly echoed by the nobility, who appeared to embrace the cause of the people while actually launching against the crowned reformer a political campaign in defence of their prerogatives. They were but little concerned with the Magyar tongue, which many of them did not even understand. The reactionary campaign was successful, and the Emperor on his death-bed had to withdraw the reforms.

In the fateful year 1848 the Hungarian aristocracy was split into two camps, the pro-Habsburgs and the Liberals. The Liberal aristocrats rallied behind the enlightened conservatism of Széchenyi and, eventually, even behind the radical Kossuth when they realised that the appeal of Liberal principles was too strong to be disregarded. They hoped, however, to act as a brake on the demagogic drive of Kossuth. To a certain extent they were successful in this. On the home front, so far as his attitude towards the nationalities was concerned, Kossuth's liberalism was of course strictly limited. This, ultimately, caused the downfall of the
000 revolution. Our author, in his description of Kossuth's rôle in the 1848 revolution, seems to disregard the fact that Kossuth, in 1848, roundly refused the offer of collaboration extended to him by the representatives of the various nationalities. It was only at the eleventh hour, when the failure of the revolution appeared unavoidable, that he changed his attitude. For the rest of his life,

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it is true, he remained an advocate of a Danubian Confederation — an idea of great promise, as we shall see. Mr. Pálóczy maintains that it was the influence of the Hungarian gentry and aristocrats that prevented the co-operation between the Magyars and the Slovaks, Rumanians and Croats. It would be idle to deny that such influences may have affected Kossuth, but, on the other hand, he was in full possession of power and there is ample evidence of his non-co-operative attitude.

The turning point of Hungarian history was 1867. Francis Joseph was obliged, after the defeat of 1866 at the hands of Prussia, to come to an understanding with Hungary. This understanding became known as the "Compromise". It was not an understanding between the Hungarian and Austrian peoples, but between the Hungarian nobility and the Emperor Francis Joseph. It implied the domination of all the nationalities of the Empire by the small minority of German-Austrians in Austria and of the Magyars in Hungary. In other words, it aimed at the rule of a minority and thus was essentially anti-democratic. Eventually, the national aspirations of the various nationalities within the Dual-Monarchy became the embodiment of democratic opposition. Since oppression, whether national or social, is always anti-democratic, the nationality question and the social questions inevitably remained closely connected. This fatal interdependence led to the blind alley which made the disruption of the Dual Monarchy inevitable. For the only possible way out would have been the self-transformation of the Dual-Monarchy into a federation of all its nationalities. But in this case the preponderance of the Slav element, by virtue of its numerical superiority, would have been unavoidable. This very possibility induced the Hungarian nobility, as well as the Germans in Berlin, to do their utmost to prevent federalism. The former would have lost their commanding position within an archaic social structure, and the latter a bridgehead in their "Drang nach Osten". By means of this so-called "Compromise" German diplomacy secured another safety-valve against any federalistic possibility in the form of the Triple Alliance. This alliance—which, in fact, was really a dual alliance between Berlin and Vienna, with Italy playing only a secondary rôle—soon degenerated into an alliance between the Berlin imperialists and the nobility in Budapest. Their interests remained identical right up to the outbreak of the First World War, and this should explain why Hungary was so faithful an ally of Germany between 1914 and 1918. Nothing could be more illustrative of the static character of Hungarian social politics between the two World Wars than the fact that

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175 almost the same motives induced Hungary to be a similarly faith-
566 ful ally of Nazi Germany in the present war.

The analogy is indeed striking. Three times within three-quarters of a century Hungarian feudalism has linked its fate with Germany. First, in 1867, when Prussia's victory over Austria enabled the Hungarian aristocracy to force a favourable compromise on the Emperor. This compromise served the double purpose of saving their prerogatives from encroachment by a dynasty which was threatening to become an ally of the villeins against their masters, and, at the same time, of ensuring their hegemony over the non-Magyar races of Hungary. It was at the bidding of the Magyar leaders of the Dual-Monarchy that the Alliance of Vienna with Berlin was engineered by Andrássy. Secondly, in 1914, when the achievement of 1867 was put to the test of history. For half a century the Magyar lords had maintained their rule over the Magyar people intact by refusing them democratic rights under the pretence that if they had such rights it would endanger "the Magyar character of the country". Such a rule of oppression could not fail to antagonise the non-Magyar peoples inside and outside the country. The bullets of Sarajevo were directed against a system the seat of which was in Budapest, and which naturally looked for protection to Berlin once it realised that the war was inevitable. The self-same Count Tisza who vainly attempted to decline responsibility for the declaration of war, became the *jusqu'au boutiste* of Berlin imperialism in his endeavour to maintain the social and national domination of his class. After the defeat of 1918, as we shall see, the forces of democracy were soon thrust aside and saddled with the responsibility for the consequences of a lost war, which had been the logical outcome of the policies of reactionary feudalists. Nevertheless these self-same classes assumed power and embarked on policies which inevitably led to a new war on Germany's side. For what else was *revisionism* but the continuation of an old policy under changed conditions? Hungary's lords now wished to regain the estates which they had not succeeded in holding, and wanted to re-establish the dominance over the non-Magyar
175 races which they had failed to maintain. While pretending to strive merely for a correction of the boundary line, they were actually engaged in an agitation to recover their lost frontiers. More than ever they had to seek the alliance of an imperialist Power which was hostile to the Slav peoples and which approved of their reactionary social regime. Nazi Germany thus offered as the ideal partner in the traditional scheme. Even before Hungary actually entered the war on the side of Berlin, revision-

ism had scored in the Vienna Awards what seemed to be considerable successes. However, they only made her participation in the war even more inevitable, since Hungary had now to fight to retain what only German help and complete subservience to Hitler could secure for her. 1941 was the necessary sequel to 1914, and, indeed, to 1867. 175

In the First World War, as we have seen, the Hungarian diehards were more faithful allies of Berlin than the Austrians, or even the Emperor himself, who, as is well known, went even so far as to make overtures for a separate peace to the Entente. After the collapse, we attempted to democratise Hungary. In particular we endeavoured to find a solution to *the land question as the foundation of any new social policy*. With the hopelessly out-of-date social structure which we inherited, it was almost impossible to solve these explosive problems as quickly and efficiently as the bitter impatience of the people would have required. Moreover, the loss of territories and the shock of the armistice emphasised the need for social compensation of the masses. Besides, the attitude of the Great Powers, by showing undue favour towards the active representatives of the *ancien régime*, and by accepting the cheap propaganda which represented us as the forerunners of Bolshevism, made our task, if that was at all possible, even more difficult. Viewing the events of those days in perspective, it is clear that we were only the first on the long list of European countries where reaction was helped back to its previous position of privilege by political forces outside their frontiers.

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The responsibility for the present situation lies partly with the Western Great Powers themselves. A brief survey of the fate which the Hungarian democratic Republic suffered at their hands will show this clearly.

In 1918, defeated Hungary was again faced with no less an issue than that of a change-over from her thousand-year Teutonic orientation to a final linking of her fate with the Slavonic peoples. As we saw, this decision affected the whole social system of the country, the replacing of a hereditary oligarchy by popular government and social democracy. Personally I had taken my stand as early as 1917 on the principles enunciated by President Wilson which involved a federative solution of the nationalities problem, together with the liquidation of oligarchy. This could have opened the road to a real understanding with the Slavs, as well as with the Rumanians. However, it was too late. The Wilsonian principles were never put into practice, some plebiscites were never held. Far-sighted statesmen amongst our neighbours

000 fought in vain against the rising tide of nationalism. Russia was assailed by the forces of civil war and was still far from having solved her problems. The vision of, and the will to, a Slavonic orientation for the Magyar people were there, but the opportunity was lacking.

Having failed on the national issue, the chances of a thoroughgoing domestic reform were not too bright. *Freedom and land* were the twin pillars of a platform which embraced the breaking up of the big landed estates and the establishment of a truly democratic Hungary based on the popular ownership of land and on equal rights of citizenship for all.

At this juncture the Western Powers proved anything but helpful. They unmistakably lent their support to the Hungarian ruling class against the democratic aspirations of the people and frowned upon the Republic with its peaceful foreign policy, preferring to it a handful of aristocrats whose whole existence was indissolubly linked to Teutonic imperialism. Half a dozen memoirs by various indiscrete politicians of right-wing Hungary revealed startling details of the intimate relations in which Hungarian counter-revolutionaries were standing with the various military missions in Budapest and Vienna. They found willing listeners for their misrepresentations of the democratic land reform as agrarian bolshevism, and the ordered efforts of a people to emancipate itself from a millennial bondage as an outbreak of mob-rule.

The Western Great Powers were mainly influenced by two considerations. Undoubtedly French military circles, as well as civilian reactionaries, were mesmerised by the "Red bogey", and completely forgot that a war fought to make the world safe for democracy could not make peace safe if it was to be built on the ruthless suppression of all forces of popular democracy in the new Europe. The British, moreover, kept to the traditional balance of power policy which made them apprehensive of French military hegemony, and even of democratic Czechoslovakia, in which they primarily saw a military asset for France. As events proved, Great Britain may well have gone too far in her apprehensions, and her wholehearted participation in the *cordon sanitaire* endeavours would hardly be regarded as a constructive attitude to-day. And yet these policies made the Western Powers more or less the deliberate supporters of Hungarian counter-revolution—to the point of actually fostering the Horthy regime and its all-round revisionism. This was the price they paid for the induction of Hungary into the *cordon sanitaire*, thus unconsciously paving the way for Horthy to Hitler.

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No wonder if the Hungarian fascists retain the *conviction in-time* that, despite another war lost on Germany's side, they will still enjoy the goodwill of influential circles in the Western capitals. They remain deeply convinced that 1944 will not prove essentially different from 1918. There will again be military missions with which they can 'confer' about the plans of the new constitutional governments, and again there will be foreign business interests which hope to gain unfair advantages by promising their support to reactionary circles. It will be good to remind them in time that 1944 is not 1918. Teheran ensured the co-operation of the three Great Powers in Europe, and the Russians themselves no longer hold to the principle of '*les Soviets partout*'. There is a strong feeling, also, in the Western capitals today that fascism must be liquidated, and that the forces of nationalist *revanche* must be dealt with once and for all. However, this will not be readily understood by Horthy and his circle. Plain speaking, and even plainer acting, will be needed if these ingrained illusions are to be dissipated before they again lead to catastrophe. Unless the Allies make it unmistakably clear that only a truly democratic Hungary can count on their sympathy, we can be sure that the old game will be started again. In that case the Allies will eventually find that they have been restoring the power of Germany in Central Europe by fostering those social forces which can never accept the hegemony of the Slav peoples on the Danube, and must therefore necessarily look to the restoration of German military might if they wish to survive.

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It is from such an analysis that the outlines of a future democratic Hungarian policy can be rightly deduced. First, there is the all-important question of Hungary's relationship to her neighbours; secondly, that of the new international system into which she must prepare to fit herself.

My first attempts at a solution of the minority problems which were at the heart of the relationship of Hungary to her neighbours began before the end of the Great War. By the beginning of October 1918 I had got in touch with the Slovakian, Rumanian and Serbian parties in Hungary and invited them to discuss the future of their peoples within the borders of the Monarchy. Nothing could, however, be achieved, as the government of the day refused to nominate a cabinet minister in whose person the minorities could have confidence. Thus was the last opportunity missed of reconstructing the monarchy on the basis of true cultural autonomy for the various peoples. Wilsonian principles

might have offered a genuine solution but for the short-sighted class interests of the Magyar oligarchy.

My second attempt was made a few months later, after the military collapse, in my capacity as Prime Minister of the Hungarian Republic. The situation had now radically changed, and what might have appeared to us an extremely liberal offer had become entirely anachronistic. The minorities of yesterday justly regarded themselves as the victors of to-morrow, and refused to envisage any solution within the framework of the Crown of St. Stephen, the very name of which was an offence to them. Indeed, it was this hated symbol of the past hegemony of the Magyar over the non-Magyar peoples that was the prime object of their attacks. Oscar Jászi, Minister of Nationalities, who had spent a lifetime in defending the rights of the non-Magyars against the presumption of the supposed heirs of St. Stephen, now pleaded in vain for a hearing. It would, indeed, have been a miracle if the representatives of the minorities had suddenly forgotten the studied indignities to which Count Tisza had subjected them, even at a time when the collapse of the Monarchy on the battlefields was already in the offing.

Such was the position when the Hungarian counter-revolution succeeded in making use of Colonel Vix, of Franchet d'Espray's command, to torpedo the democratic Republic. There is documentary evidence to show that the aim was to bring the Bolsheviks to power and thereby provide the counter-revolution with a pretext to call in foreign troops to suppress 'red revolution'. Eventually Count Bethlen, like the *émigrés* of Coblenz, encouraged the Rumanians to invade the country, and Admiral Horthy was installed as the new head of state. At once the new regime made revisionism the centre of its policies. From now onwards chauvinism in its most extreme forms was trumps, and the whole of Hungary's foreign policy was put into the service of an irresponsible propaganda—remember Lord Rothermere—the only possible meaning of which could be that unless Hungary regained the frontiers of St. Stephen she would not cease to prepare for the overthrow of the new system of states created by the Treaties. If the former racial minorities had been distrustful of Hungary before, even when addressed by their proven friends, they would now naturally regard Hungary as a dangerous enemy against whom all military precautions must be taken.

Their suspicions were to be justified. Horthy and his Awakening Magyars started out on the double task of creating the new methods of violence characteristic of fascism and in putting these methods of terror into the service of a ruthless attack against their

neighbours. It was only logical that when Mussolini's Italy professed to erect fascism into a new system of society, and at the same time launched an international campaign in favour of revision, Hungary joined her in close alliance. And it was this same line of policy which was later to be crowned by Hungary's alliance with Hitler, the arch-fascist and arch-revisionist.

From now onwards Hungarian revisionism began to distinguish amongst its neighbours. The fascist ones were preferred to those who were merely authoritarian, and the latter very much to those who showed any inclination towards democracy. The Austria of Dollfuss, the Yugoslavia of Regent Paul, the Rumania of Antonescu, were of one ilk; Horthy and his governments found less difficulty in falling in with them under Hitler's lead. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, was singled out as *the* national enemy. This democratic state, which was, as it were, the living rebuttal of all that counter-revolutionary Hungary stood for, was made the victim of Horthy's and Hitler's conspiracy. For Czechoslovakia was a state of advanced social reforms, where all working-class parties were equally free to play their part, where racial minorities were treated with fairness, and which played an important rôle in international politics—mainly on account of the enlightened and peaceable spirit of her statesmen. Horthy's press and radio concentrated all their venom on this country before Hitler finally launched his treacherous attack on Prague. Even before that Horthy joined in with Hitler in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, after which joint act of violence Hungary was politically and morally chained to Germany. Eventually, Horthy–Hungary was dragged by its chosen leader, Hitler, into a veritable crusade against all the decencies of international life, participating in the attack on Soviet Russia and, finally, debasing herself to the point of handing over the Jews to be slaughtered in Hitler's human abattoirs.

This is the way Horthy and his fascist guard have served the Hungarian people in whose name they professed to be acting, while excluding them from all influence on public life. The industrial workers' party existed only on sufferance; the agricultural labourer and the smallholder were denied the minimum of political rights; and yet it is these broad masses of the common people who will have to face the consequences of the criminal policies to which their selfish rulers committed them. If ever a people was betrayed by its masters; if ever these masters built an unanswerable case against themselves; if ever bankrupt statesmanship left an insoluble task to its unfortunate successors, that is true of Horthy–Hungary and the despicable gang which

000 delivered their country to the fate that is awaiting the Third Reich. It seems almost a mockery to speak of a future foreign policy of Hungary under these circumstances.

And yet if consolidation is to take place on the Danube, and if the people of Hungary, innocent of the crimes perpetrated in their name, are to build up a fresh existence, new and daring policies must be contrived. Actually, they are almost exactly the same policies as have been advocated by true liberals since the beginning of the century, if not, indeed, since 1850, when Lajos Kossuth recognized his error, and turned towards the democratic conception of a Danubian federation of free peoples as the ultimate answer to the secular problem of the Danubian jig-saw puzzle.

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At this point the problems of a more distant future tend to merge with those of the present.

Any Hungarian who speaks of a Danubian Confederation must mean an irrevocable Slav orientation of his country, just as any statesman who accepts the principle of such an orientation thereby implies some form or other of confederation. This follows from the geographic and demographic configuration of the Danubian region proper, which was the home of Slavs even before the time when first Magyars and then Germans penetrated it from the East and West, respectively. In the Balkans also South Slav peoples were settled, who gave their language even to some peoples of other racial extraction like the Bulgars. Except for the Rumanians in parts of Transylvania, from the Aegean to the Baltic Slav peoples inhabiting that part of the world, were for a long time Magyar, and German hegemony obscured the outlines of the ethnographic map. And behind the colourful façade adorned by the basilicas and cathedrals of Byzantium and Prague, Spalato and Cracow, Zagreb and Warsaw, stood the teeming home of mother Russia, destined to populate one-sixth of the globe. It was a world of the wooden plough and the poor peasant. On the day when he would rise in freedom and turn to the machine for his livelihood, Eastern and South-eastern Europe were bound to become the homeland of Slav culture and Slav might.

No shadow of doubt can attach to the meaning of Slav orientation. On the part of the Hungarian people it simply signifies the politically inevitable acceptance of the facts of geography and a final liquidation of that long period of their country's history when her relation to the Slav peoples was that of lord and serf. In the last resort it was, therefore, the emancipation of the serfs which compelled Hungary to change from a Teutonic orientation

to a Slavonic one. For the former serf was inevitably destined to become a free and equal partner, and Kossuth merely drew the conclusion from his own acts of agrarian liberation when he—unfortunately too late—insisted on the concept of a Danubian Confederation. 000

This latter idea, however, calls for a careful definition. A Danubian Confederation which would imply the separation of Western and Central Europe from Russia must be entirely unacceptable to any democratic Hungarian, indeed to anybody who has the peace and prosperity of Europe at heart. Yet such was the notion behind that *cordon sanitaire*, one of the earliest victims of which—my government—was liquidated in 1918 by the reactionary militarists whose political horizon was confined to the dread of bolshevism. But there is no need to separate the members of such a Confederation from their ancient connections with the West—with England, the mother of parliaments, and the France of the Great Revolution—and to establish its frontiers as a Chinese Wall which would prevent free cultural and economic intercourse with the Western Powers and the whole of Central Europe.

The peculiar position of this Western fringe of the Slav world must be thoroughly understood. While its whole past history is mainly Western, its economic, and especially its rural, structure is predominantly Eastern. This was a peasant world, and as such a backwater of the West. If it is to become, as it finally and unreservedly should, a part of the emerging Slav region, then it is also changing from the position of an Eastern straggler of the West into a Western pioneer of the East, but *an East in which a tremendous new industrial force is arising in Russia.* Although the agrarian question remains the centre of all the problems, some measure of industrialisation is necessary in order to absorb the rural population which will become redundant by reason of the very advance of agricultural methods. That is why the ideal of free trade, for all its attractions, does not completely answer the needs of the Danube. For free trade means further specialisation towards an agricultural economy and increased obstacles to even the necessary moderate degree of industrialisation. Only a regional economy with broad trade connections to the East and West will suit the needs of these countries.

Hungary must look primarily to those politically and industrially advanced neighbours whose efficient methods, democratic traditions and peaceful outlook make them the natural leaders of the Western Slavs. Behind the façade of the old Austria, for almost a century Czech industry and efficiency provided the administrative corps of the Habsburg Empire. In the short

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000 quarter of a century of their renewed national existence the Czechs have proved to the whole world their outstanding abilities in the sphere of organization and statecraft. I confidently look to the time when Hungary will seek her future in close co-operation with her northern neighbour, perhaps on the basis of another "Compromise", only this time not of aristocracies and thrones, but of enlightened peoples facing their common future with fortitude.

Such a nucleus of permanent co-operation between Prague and Budapest would provide the Danubian region with a centre of attraction well-fitted to become a stable foundation for that democratic grouping of peoples which the federation is to be. Already, in Tito's Yugoslavia, in the new Bulgaria, in the Rumania, Poland and Austria of to-morrow, the forward-looking partners of a fairly homogeneous state system can be discerned, one and all convinced that only under the Russian shield can a Slavonic Eastern Europe feel safe and that this dominating fact need not involve the loosening of their indispensable commercial and cultural ties with the West.

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Germany has, for a long time to come, faded out from the pattern of power. This means a new chapter in the history of the Continent. For the common people of Hungary this may well bring the hour of social and political liberation. The timely book of Mr. Pálóczy-Horváth will help the world to understand the entirely new problems that face it on the Danube.

MICHAEL KÁROLYI

18 *Sept.*, 1944.
London.

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CHAPTER I

WE ARE to be punished again. We are used to being punished. 000
The first punishment which we remember was many hundred years ago, when Attila, the great lord of the Huns, started his big drive and took us away from our homes in Central Asia to become the baggage-carrying slaves of his huge armada.

You know Attila's story. You don't know ours. The lords did not tell you. Anyway, we were the slaves of Attila. We carried the weapons, the food, the tents. You know how Attila dealt with people who had weapons and could defend themselves. Now you can imagine how he dealt with us.

We lost our homes in Central Asia. We lost our gods. We lost everything save our Magyar language. This was the language of the slaves.

We were slaves. Later we became serfs. Now we are the "people". We still have nothing save our Magyar language. We kept that, and our lords took it over.

Of course this was not so simple. We had to keep silence a 197
lot. We are silent people. Servants have to be. But perhaps we can thank our quiet and silent nature that we were not massacred with our lords, the Huns and Avars, and that later, when the proud and tough fighters of Arpad—the first Hungarian Prince—appeared in 896 in the lands below the Karpat range, they took a liking to us and adopted our language. This often happens. The proud invaders take over the language of the invaded.

But in this case our fight for our language was not over. The great king St. Stephen, who was the first Christian king of our land, turned Hungary into a Christian, and not a national, country. The language of St. Stephen's Hungary was Latin. Our lords spoke Latin till 1830. Magyar was the language of the slaves. Half the land belonged to St. Stephen, the other half belonged to 120 lords and the Catholic Church. Our lords liked the German Catholic priests, who undertook to explain to us that it was worth while to drudge and want, for we should get all the riches in the hereafter.

We lived on the *pusztas* of our lords.

You have naturally heard about the Hungarian *puszta*. 586
You have heard about a great plain where picturesquely dressed 423
horsemen lead a happy life, the mirage is beautiful, and food is

666 423 plentiful. This is not our *puszta*. We mean quite a different thing by it. There are the huge estates in the country of our lords. In the centre is the big manor-house with the great park. Behind the park are the houses of the overseers, then the big, beautiful stables and pigsties. Then come our huts—one-room huts, where generally two families live. Occasionally, when a pigsty is too old to be used, then we may get it, so that sometimes every family has a room of its own. This is good, for it is very difficult for more than ten people to live in the same hut. The women-folk quarrel. There are difficulties.

361 Well, anyhow, the complex of our huts, behind the park of the lord in the centre of the huge estate, is the *puszta*—our *puszta*. It is very far away from the villages where the free people live in well-ordered rows of houses. These villages are splendid and interesting places; they have shops, and people can even buy ooo matches if they have the money. We borrow our fires from the upper-class people—let's say from the honourable wife of the estate-smith, if she is in a good mood.

We are not interesting people, we servants of the *puszta*. We [423] do not know our number. But, as half the country of our lords belongs to big estates, you can imagine that we are many.

Sometimes we see picture books which one of the bright *puszta*-lads gets from the manor. There are books about the savages of Africa. There are no books about us.

Perhaps you will not mind if, before going on with our story, we tell you how we live now. We are so eager to talk, you know, if we think that someone may care to listen. Of course we complain. This is our fault. Serfs do complain if they are listened to. But perhaps it is worth your while to listen. Our life is quite as "quaint" and "different" as that of the New Guinea people.

512 Generally we get up at three o'clock in the morning. This is good, for at harvest-time we have to start work an hour earlier. There is, of course, always a great deal of work on the *puszta*. There are lots of animals: cows, oxen, horses, sheep, pigs, chickens. The stables and pigsties have to be cleaned, the big carts filled with manure, the cows fed and milked. Then, [262] about half-past five in the morning, we can have our breakfast. In good times we have some warm soup—"lebbencs" soup. This is delicious. For a family of five you take an onion and a spoonful of pork-fat and cook it and throw in it little pieces of wheat-flakes. In every plate you get three, or even four, pieces of these flakes. But lebbencs-soup is quite exceptional. Generally we eat a chunk of bread, as big as our fist.

Then we start the real work in the fields. About eleven the women-folk take their baskets, cover them with a kerchief, put the baskets on their heads, and proceed to the field. They take lunch to the men-folk. The baskets are big. They are covered because our women-folk are proud. The baskets under the kerchief generally contain a soup-bowl, but more often than not this bowl is empty. Nevertheless, the women bring them out, and the men have their chunks of bread in their left hand and, squatting on their hams, they spoon with their right hand the soup which is not there. We are foolish people. We are ashamed in front of each other. We are ashamed at not having any soup. For many centuries we have pretended to eat the imaginary soup, and still we have not given up the pretence. Proudly the women carry the baskets out to the fields in a solemn procession, balancing them beautifully on their heads. And the baskets contain a chunk of bread, an empty bowl, the spoon-for-pretence, and sometimes an onion, a green paprika, or a gherkin. 512

And you can often see the men, after they have eaten the non-existent soup, wipe their lips and moustaches with the back of their hands, and even emit a satisfied grunt.

The procession of women arrives at the fields about noon. The wives squat beside their men and watch them eat. They eat even less. There is half an hour for lunch and rest, and then work starts again.

The work is heavy. We are not. If we get a chance to complain to the overseers who urge us to work, who are never satisfied with us, we say:

"How can we work faster, how can we do more, when there is so little weight on us?"

Because, to tell you the truth, we are always hungry. Our ambition would be to put on more weight if possible, to be fat like the overseers or the estate management staff.

You have never tried to work for hours and hours in the scorching sun with the heavy Hungarian scythe and falx, cutting the rough stalks of maize and wheat. 243 512

We do this some nine or ten hours a day. The men are in a line and have to move very fast because the overseers and foremen are watching and our women and girls come behind us to gather up what we cut down. Our arms, our whole body, move in great sweeps, like those of the golfers in the parks of our lords when they want to hit that tiny white ball. This sweeping movement—with more power behind it—we have to make many thousand times a day. The women-folk have to stoop, gather, bind—stoop, gather, bind, again and again, for many hours.

000 Our backs ache. Our whole body aches. By the afternoon we are all a bit dizzy. This is the reason why we should like to put on some more weight.

And naturally we are constantly hungry. Our muscles hurt, the sweat runs down in rivulets and carves little sun-scorched ravines on the back of our necks.

Of course most of us are not aware that the aching of our bodies and the emptiness of our bellies is something peculiar. We have been used to this for thousands of years. We only start thinking about it now that we talk about it, you understand.

512 Well, our days are not very interesting. From dawn till dusk we work in the fields.

Then we go home, to tend the cattle, to clean and feed, to store away and to prepare. Our work is less in winter. Then the animals have to be fed only twice a day; in summer three times.

This work in the stables generally begins at seven in the evening; in winter sometimes earlier. Then the estate management allots the work for the next day. We wait for our orders, and when we have got them we go slowly back to our huts behind the stables.

[461] We are slow. We are tired and ill. We generally work, as you have seen, from two or three in the morning till nine or ten at night. According to the laws now regulating our lives, we have no holidays. If you work about eighteen hours a day, seven days a week; if you work always, year in, year out—well, then you become like us: slow and tired.

The work of the *csiras*—those who tend the cows—is the hardest. Generally, after four years, hard work, and the heavy manure-atmosphere of the stables, destroy the lungs of the *csiras*. If a *csiras* is lucky, he gets away before he starts to spit blood. But many stay, become wrecks, and go to the villages to live by begging.

627 Our lords, the estate-managers and their assistants, when they curse us, say that we are like animals. They treat us as such. According to a new law we are not supposed to be given corporal punishment above the age of eighteen. According to the law, the estate servants between twelve and eighteen may be hit, but in such a way "as not to cause a wound which does not heal within eight days". We have the right to go to the village doctor and get a document stating that we have received a wound which will not heal in eight days. But the village is far away, and we are not permitted to leave the estate—save, on some estates, on every second Sunday, when we have the morning off for church. So this law about a wound caused by corporal punishment does not help us much.

And of course we are often hit and kicked, even if we are over eighteen. Men over thirty-five are generally not hit in the face —they just get an occasional hit with the whip. In some districts it is considered a very grave thing to be struck with a whip or stick. In those districts we don't mind the kicks and hits in the face, which belong to the daily routine, but we do not permit ourselves to be whipped. 627

To you it probably seems very extraordinary, this being hit. To us it is not. We are hit by our parents, at school, in the army, of course, where the sergeants kick our behinds; the gendarmes hit us in the face if there is trouble with us and the estate-management staff always hit us. 600

The *csiras*, for instance, who mostly sleep in the stables beside the cows, are awakened by a kick. True, they would not move without being kicked. They don't think this extraordinary. They are used to handling the cattle, and the cattle have to be prodded by kicks and hits.

Well, when the day's work is over—when our lords have told the gardeners, shepherds, field-labourers, cart-drivers what to do next day, they, of course, standing at attention—then we are free till next dawn. 517 512

Then we clean ourselves. At dawn we don't bother. Would you? Would you if you knew that, immediately after, you will have to work with the cattle, with manure, in the fields, in the dust? Anyhow, we clean ourselves and prepare for our dinner, when we always eat something warm, not only pretend to do so.

We eat some soup. The soup is generally made by throwing a few pieces of potatoes into boiling water. A few onions and a little lard make a delicious soup. In harder times the soup is naturally thinner. Not everybody likes our soups. Once a lady visited us from the manor and tasted the soup. She spat it out, and said it tasted like dish-water. We like it. Sometimes we can eat our favourite dish, which is made of a mixture of wheat and potatoes, with a little yeast, and boiled in water. We very rarely eat meat. At weddings and funerals we manage to eat meat, because it would be a great shame to get married or die without a feast of meat and wine. 262

Then—after dinner—we live our private lives. We sit in front of our huts and talk. In the winter we sit inside. Sometimes we gather in one of the huts to read. We know how to read and write. We go to schools, which are very far away. The children walk in most cases ten miles to and from the schools every day. But they like to do it. And we like to read. We don't read newspapers, for we have not got the money. But we read books, 517 212

517 chiefly history books, if we can get them. Books are treasures.
212 Generally the children get them from people who are interested in us. There are students in Budapest who sometimes organise libraries on wheels. Last year this library let us have a book by Tolstoy for a week—*War and Peace*. We could not read the whole of it. We gathered in Uncle Andras's house, all the adult population of our cluster of huts, and we took turns reading aloud. It was winter, and we read four hours every evening, so that we had only three and a half hours' sleep. It was wonderful. We asked the students to send us a book about our history, so that we should be able to keep it. They sent it to Uncle Andras. He had to go a long way for it—to the village post office. But they did not give him the book, but told him to go to the gendarmerie. There they boxed his ears and hit his feet with sticks. "This is to teach you not to ask for books from the city, you old socialist swine." So, you see, it is quite difficult to get books.

517 Mostly we have no oil for our lamps. So we just talk. Old people talk about their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. They generally begin like this: "He was a very poor man, grandfather Janos was, rest his soul", as if it were an unusual thing to be very poor.

We talk. The young folk play around a bit; they go walking
837 or sing for themselves. There are always a few young men about
566 who are sulking because their girl is being "used" in the manor or by someone belonging to the estate-management staff.

Because the fact is that our women-folk *are* "used" by our lords, estate-managers, their assistants, and even by the overseers. We belong to them, don't we? It is quite natural that if they want to use our girls they simply say, "You, Julcsa or Terka, come round this evening." And they naturally go. Some young estate assistants are nice about it and say, "Come in, Julcsa, to darn my socks"; but they generally simply tell them to come in.

The girls don't talk about this. They get some wine and sometimes a piece of bacon. Next day they are tired. But they work just the same. If they are a bit slack, the assistant rebukes them: "Do you think you can be slack just because I used you last night?" Then the girl blushes. So they work even harder next day so as not to be shamed.

566 Well, after dinner we live our private life. Let us suppose that
135 it is summer. Harvest time. The *puszta* is quite lively. The landworkers are here. We, the serf-servants, are not enough to do the harvest, so every spring the bailiff of our lord goes away to hire harvest gangs.

He goes to far-away places, to the east and north of the country

of our lords. (We, the serf-servants, live mostly in the western half of Hungary, the country of huge estates.) 566 735

He goes away—goes from village to village and looks over the harvest-gangs. In the spring the land-workers are a pretty poor lot. They eat up everything they have made during the previous season. They live on the outskirts of villages, in huts for which they have to pay money. They are pretty weak by the spring. Some of them are so desperate that they even spend the contract-money, which is dangerous for them. For it is the custom, when the harvest gang makes a contract, for every person to put two to five *pengœs* into his labour book. This money belongs to the bailiff. Most bailiffs don't take on people who give them no money. Or, if they are lucky, the bailiff gives them an advance on their wages so that they can pay him his money.

So the harvest-gang are here. They have just arrived to-day. First they get a month's pay in advance. This they send home immediately, so that their families shall have something to eat. They generally ask for the second month's advance too, so that they can eat. And then they *do* eat. They sit in the stable of the oxen, which is their home while they are with us. The *csiras* take the oxen to their summer home in the distant fields, and the harvesters get their place. They sit in the huge stable on their bunks of straw and eat. For this first evening the estate generally provides a few candlesticks so that they can see and get accustomed to finding their bunks in the dark. We of the *puszta* stand in the doorway and look on while they eat.

The harvest-gangs which visit us differ greatly. Some of them are a lively, light-hearted lot—the harvesters are always young people—some of them are grim and serious. But they are all lean and starved-out.

As we look at them eating, we remember the poems of our great poet, Sandor Petöfi, about the dogs and the wolves. The dogs are whipped by their masters, they are kicked about, they never have a minute to rest, they are not free, but they always have somewhere to sleep, and their masters throw them some food. The wolves are haunted by cold and starvation, but they are free.

We, the serf-servants, are the dogs. The land-workers are the wolves. And now these young wolves eat.

The stable is divided into the men's part and the women's part. There is a law about the duty of the estates to provide separate quarters for men and women. So the bailiff puts a wooden board at the entrance to the stable with the legend: "Men to the right, women to the left".

000 Of course this is just a matter of form. There are young married couples among them. They sleep together. And then the sweethearts sleep together too.

The harvest-gang are eating. Some of us stand about and get acquainted. We tell them about the foremen and overseers, about the rules and customs of the estate. They tell us about their country: about the peasants in their village, about love and murder, about evictions and confiscations. A land-worker lad fell in love with a peasant girl. He spoke to her after church. The girl blushed and ran away. But the peasant boys went for him, and licked him for his cheek at speaking to a peasant girl. He was a sight when they left him lying on the street. Then the peasant girl came back and helped him to his feet. Now she is here with him. We all stare at her. Imagine, a peasant girl marrying a land-worker! Of course she was thrown out of her family. Her father and mother will never speak to her again. But she is young and foolish, and sits happily beside her man, munching bread and onions and enjoying herself so much that we all look at her.

Sometimes we get dwarf-holders* as harvest-gangs. They are almost as poor as we are. They own an acre or two, and have big families. Of course they must hire themselves out to peasants and to estates to make ends meet. Last year we got people from the Eger wine-grape district. There the famous red grape grows from which they make the Eger "ox-blood" wine. Gentlemen in Budapest, while they listen to the gipsies, drink this wine and pay perhaps two *pengœs* a litre for it. But the dwarf-holders could not sell their wine. They had no money for transport, no money for the tariff. You have to pay the tariff if you want to take your wine to the city. Only big people, like peasants and gentlemen-landowners, can afford to sell their wine if there is a bad year. It was a bad year, so these Eger people could not sell their wine.

262 273 They had very little to eat. So in the morning they heated some wine and had that for breakfast. Of course with nothing in it—just the sour red wine, heated up. One wants to ease one's bowels in the morning, and tries to fool one's belly that there is something in it. One cannot drink warm water for breakfast.

That was all right. But then the school-teachers started to complain. The children, who also had wine-soup for breakfast on an empty stomach—these people could only afford a chunk of bread 000 once a day—staggered half-drunk to their distant schools. The

* Dwarf-holders are those who possess only an acre or so of land—sometimes less. As this is not enough to support a family, they must hire out their labour.

school-teachers sent reports to Budapest about this. They said they could not teach tipsy children. In reality they were angry because the children could not work for them. Teachers are paid by the State. They get very little. But they all have a garden or a small bit of land. And the children work in their garden or on their land. While the first grade has a lesson, let us say, the second, third and fourth grades work in the garden, help in the kitchen to peel potatoes, draw water from the fountain, feed the animals, and so on. They are at school all day. It is a welcome change for them to do work to which they are used half the time.

But they were constantly tipsy, and the teachers got angry. There was a great commotion about this. A committee went to investigate, newspapers wrote about it and some socialist even spoke about it in Parliament. This lasted two months. The children still had their wine-breakfast. Then harvest-time came. So the question was solved. The Parliament went on to more important work—to pass laws, for instance, on how to take away the possessions of Jewish lords and give them to non-Jewish lords. As a general rule they often passed laws about the Jews. First we thought that it would be a good thing. Our district had no Jews. So we thought it was only to give us some Jews too, because the Jews are very good at buying and selling. In other districts, where there are Jews, they come with enormous packs on their backs, full of stuff, and they sell us ribbons, kerchiefs, needles, wool, for eggs, or whatever we have. But it turned out that it was not this kind of law. It was just the business of rich Jews and rich Christians.

The law was hard on poor Jews and some horses. It turned out that there are Jews among the horses too. A horse is a Jew if its owner had more than two Jewish grandparents. And according to one of the new laws a Jewish horse is forbidden to procreate. In Hungary the procreation of horses is under State control. This was tough on some horses.

Nowadays we don't get many foreigners. Before 1914 many of the harvest-gangs were Rumanian or Slovak or Ukrainian. Our lords brought them from distant places so as to make sure that the harvesters couldn't desert if the work was too hard for them. The land-workers of our district, on the other hand, had to go to far-away places. They went as unskilled labourers in the cities; they went to work on railway lines.

A serf in the region where he was born, where he knows the language, is a more daring person than in some foreign part where he knows nothing. So our lords—if they can—mix us up.

566 They have done this for the last thousand years—as you will see from our story. They chased out the Magyar serfs to Rumania and took in the Rumanian serfs who were chased out by their lords. And now they—both our own and the Rumanian lords—are angry because they have hopelessly mixed up the population of Transylvania. Well, you can't eat your cake and have it.

They wanted cheap, frightened, docile serfs. They got them. But they also want big countries, so as to get a lot of taxes from us and be very important. But having mixed us up, they cannot decide which of them ought to have the bigger State.

There is an old man on our *puszta* who says that our lords won't have to worry a lot. They will create many more States. You know, separate countries. They go in for this State business because that means many good jobs for them.

COO Our old people tell us a lot about the period before the first big war of our lords. They tell us about when some Rumanian and Slovak workers started to sing their songs. We liked them. They were similar to our tunes. So we sang them with the foreigners and then taught them our songs. It seems that the bailiff heard about this and came to tell us that the dirty Rumanians and Slovaks had stolen our songs. We thought that you could not steal songs. They are there for your liking. We felt proud that they had taken over our tunes.

But some of the younger lads started to argue next day about this song business.

"Look here, Juon," they said to a Rumanian who had learnt our language in the army of our lords—"look here, Juon," they said, "after all, you are singing our songs." They started to argue, then took out their knives. A general fight followed. Three were killed, and two of our lads and a Rumanian were hanged for it.

After this happened we were sad. For when we come to think of it, the fact that we have similar tunes probably means that we are similar. We ought to be friends. They are just like ordinary folk. They work from dawn to dusk, as we do. Their women give birth to their children on the field, as ours do, working till the last minute and only going home after the little one is crying there next to them. They have just as little weight on their bodies as we have.

But we are foolish. We soon forget. If our lords start one of their wars, we soon get as mad at their enemies as they are.

We know that you don't like small people who pretend to be very proud of their countries. Please understand that we are not like this. We know well enough that the country of our lords is

not *our* country. We are told often enough that we are not the nation. (Though nowadays the lords say that we are the nation also:)

No, we know all about wars. Take, for instance, these frontier incidents with which our lords start their wars. Well, who guards the frontiers when our lords prepare for their wars? The lords? No, *we* do. We are called up. We are sore as hell because our families will hunger even more. It is true that in the army they give you very good food and a lot of it. You eat three times a day; you get beans, as much bread as you want, soup and quite often meat. But our families suffer, we have to march a lot, the sergeants slap our faces, kick our behinds, the officers whip us. We don't like it.

You can imagine that when we are on frontier-guard duties we don't want any more difficulties. The officers tell us where our country ends and where the other begins. We must shoot at the neighbouring frontier guards if they cross the line, and they must shoot at us. So we don't cross it, except when the sergeants or officers are not about. Then we cross over, maybe, for perhaps the neighbours have more cigarettes and we have more meat. Then we swap. Or they want to shoot a hare. They lie on their stomachs and watch. A hare shows up. They smile in friendly fashion. We smile back. They understand that we won't raise a row if they shoot at the hare in our direction. Well, if they are good shots, we divide the hare afterwards. But sergeants and officers don't hear about it. Please don't think that we cause incidents.

So how do incidents happen? Do we get a longing to walk over the ground a hundred metres in front of our line? The ground is just as muddy over there as ours. Why should we?

No, it is obvious that the sergeants and the officers cause the incidents, when they get orders to do so.

Yes, we know all this, and still, when the war starts, we soon get mad, we soon really want to fight—for a time. Such a thing as that which happened to a stupid lad of the third *puszta* beyond ours is rare. He went to the front in 1914. He wrote a pink military postcard to his wife, saying that he had had the good fortune to arrive at the front of the war of our lords. The officers were very mad about it.

We get really angry if our lords tell us that some foreigners want us to talk their language. You understand, we have nothing save our Magyar language. It is a terrifying experience enough to talk to one of our lords, even though he talks the same—well, almost the same—as we do. What would happen if we had to

[* i.e. Hungarian peasants--Analyst]

186 talk a foreign language? Or imagine, if we have to go to the law courts. It is difficult enough for us to understand in any case, even though the Magyar language is spoken. But we manage somehow. Of course the honourable lawyers always profit. But still, it is not so terrifying as it would be to go to a foreign court. Or suppose for a minute that you, speaking English, have a very important case—something of life and death importance. Let us say you had a rich uncle who became a peasant and left you a cow. And now some distant relative of his also wants the cow. So you go to law. What chance would you have to defend your rights if the law refused to listen to anything except the Magyar language?

So we get scared and angry if they want to take away our language. And then we fight. But we see, after many months, that the other side is just like us. Then we don't want to fight.

000 How did we come to speak about all this? Oh, yes, the harvest-gang has arrived. All sorts of people come. They are very tired. You must understand, they are tired because they have to get accustomed to all kinds of different work. For some weeks they work with the hoe. For some weeks they push handcarts filled with sand for road-building. Then again they hire themselves out to masons or railway-builders.

They are the unskilled labourers. The foremen are angry with them because they are so clumsy. Of course, their bodies are just getting used to pushing handcarts when they have to start working with the heavy 15-pound hammer at building railways. So their muscles are sore, they are clumsy; but they hurry and force themselves to go on. You cannot let yourself be kicked out on the first day when you have hired yourself out for two weeks. If you are lucky, you can make a lot of money. You can, perhaps, return with a whole piglet. You can then feed it somehow, fatten it up. When it is big you can perhaps sell it, buy more piglets, feed them up, sell them with luck. Provided you can manage to feed them, provided they don't get sick and don't perish, provided you have work all this time so that you are not forced to sell too early, you can perhaps make enough money to buy a piece of land somewhere. Then you are a peasant. We all dream of such things, of course, and so we are eager to do all kinds of work. But our bodies, our muscles, are not. They ache.

471 Among the harvest-gangs there are many such dreamers. They know about distant parts where you can buy land. Because in the country of our lords you cannot buy land everywhere. In most parts you cannot buy even if you have the money. They don't want to sell. They want more land.

The peasants, who are even more eager than we to buy, fret 471
a lot because of this. If we were to have the money, we could go anywhere to buy. Let's say to some distant part where a lord had too many expensive sweethearts in Budapest and has to sell. But the peasants already have some land. They would like to get more next to their piece or in the same neighbourhood. But the lords will not sell. In such parts the peasants have only one 847
child. This is called the "Egyke" custom: the "one-liness". Our peasants learned this from German peasants, to whom our lords sold some land in the south-western part of our country. These peasants have only one child. The rest they "make-away", as they say. They don't want their land to become tinier and tinier bits because of the children. After one child the peasant-women go to the "old one" of the village. This is always a wise old woman. She helps them to "make the child away". The 000
peasant-women in the districts where "one-liness" is a custom are mostly bad-tempered. They nag their men. They have much lust in their bodies. The carryings on in those villages! The luxury! The food! They eat meat every day. They have silk dresses. We are, of course, mostly barefooted. Some of us never have boots on our feet, except when we are in the army. The better off among us have boots. Of course they never wear them for work. If they have to go to the court, or sometimes if they go to the village to church, they proudly carry them on their shoulders, and before arriving in the city or village they put them on. You can save them for your son this way. And it is a proud feeling indeed to leave your son boots which he can put on when he grows up.

Oh, yes. The harvesters are here. Some of us stand about the stables and get acquainted. Others sit in front of the huts and talk. We talk a lot about our own affairs. Who has two hens, whose son has become a gentleman and sends some money home. And so on.

Our conditions have not changed very much since 1867. 566
They were the same before the first big war of our lords, and 511
they are the same now. A serf-servant on our *pusztas* gets twelve to forty *pengœs* a year. This is about ten to thirty shillings in your money. So the cash an average *puszta* family gets a year is never less than ten shillings and never more than thirty. In addition, we get 1200 pounds of wheat, 1000 pounds of rye and 1000 pounds of barley. We have the right to keep poultry about the house, but for every hen we have to give five eggs a year to the estate. We—a family of five or six or seven—are entitled, moreover, to 300 standard square feet of garden and 1600

511 standard square of maize or potato field. But the garden and
566 this bit of field must be worked by the women and children. The men must work for the estate.

This does not mean very much to you. But during the present war you have learnt what rationing means. So you will know how we live if we tell you that from all this an average family has one-third of a pound of bread as its daily ration and a sixth of a pound of "*tészta*", which is something like noodles. The potato ration is about two potatoes a day for the whole family. In addition to this we can sometimes eat some onions and green paprika. We still cannot afford, of course, to eat the war-time bread-ration of our lords, which is half a pound a day.

Some students and writers who made a study of our lives, as Englishmen study savages, have calculated that if we take into account everything we get—money, food, the value of our huts and so on—then our daily income is between a penny and two-pence. And for this we work never less than fourteen, and mostly sixteen to eighteen, and during harvest even twenty, hours a day. Before the war, when some of us agitated for a law saying that we should not work more than twelve hours, the gendarmes interfered, and there was shooting. We will tell you about this later.

000 One of us who was educated and became a writer told us a funny thing. He said that gentlemen of enormous learning in the West complained that the world of today cannot get information about the daily life of the workers in the Dark Ages. How amusing! They should come and visit our *pusztas*. Most maps say that we are in Central Europe. Anyhow, nothing has changed here. Our huts are the same as they were a thousand years ago. The laws are the same.

In the Chapel of the Manor there is a picture of the Day of Judgement. In the top corner of the picture there are angels in great splendour, and below—everywhere—in deep darkness there are the struggling masses to be judged. If you want to understand what it felt like to be the masses in the Dark Ages or what it feels like to be us, you should think about this picture. Sharp brilliance, splendour, richness, joy in the tiny bit at the top; darkness and misery for the huge masses below.

It may be that you are not prepared to believe what we have already told and are going to tell you. Do you think we should have the impudence to lie to you? Do you think we should dare to send out our cry to you, hoping for help, if we did not know that the truth is with us?

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This war will be over some day. Come and see us. Tell your ambassadors to send out their servants to look us up. Your ambassadors met our lords. They hunted with them. It was the right thing for them to do. They are concerned with the things that countries do. It would be foolish for them to visit *us*, who have nothing to say in the matters of the country of our lords.

Yes, please come and see us. Come and see the sharp contrast between splendour and deep shadow. Come and see the Middle Ages.

We do not want to lie to you, so we hasten to point out again that naturally not all of us live on the *pusztas*. Millions of us live in villages and towns. There are the tenants, the small-holders, the secretly organised land-workers, the migrating rural labourers. There are all kinds. Our way of life, our customs and morals, our ideas and character, our bodies and faces vary to a great extent. But we have one thing in common. We are all very poor, we all live on or below the twopence-a-day income level. But money and food are not everything. In some districts the soil is very hard. To break it up, to work it, takes the sap out of us. In such districts we are a very tired, sulky, unhappy lot. In some districts the soil is rich and soft. There our hoe runs into it as if it were lard. There we are cheerful, there is lots of life and mischief in us. In such districts there are more poets among us.

There are districts where the land-workers have separate clubs of their own, as if they were peasants. In such districts we read a great deal during our spare time. And if we are land-workers we have a lot of free time, for we never have full-time employment. We read and write. We have produced many writers for our lords. Recently some of these writers have showed that they are still our friends. They get enormous sums for their books. One of us just wrote down the story of his life, and in Budapest they paid him, it is said, forty pounds. Imagine, this is about the cash income of forty families for a year!

Yes, in those districts we are not so unhappy nowadays, though we are probably more hungry there than on the *pusztas*. There we are more daring. We say that we have rights. We even say that we have rights to the land. Of course we are rebuked. One of our lords, Count Somsich, said in the House of Lords in October 1942 that "the theory according to which every Hungarian has a right to some land is entirely false". Some other speakers said the same.

But we still think, some of us, that we have a right to some land.

You probably think that we of the *puszta*, we the dogs, not the wolves, are an obnoxiously servile lot for letting *them* kick our

000 behinds, use our women and take away our strength. You are right. But not entirely. For just now we are tired and frightened. We have just lost one of our battles.

God, how we fought! And how *they* defeated us!

May we tell you, quickly, about our last defeat before going on?

423 Listen. This is not an old story. It happened between 1920 and 1937. There is a great lord, Count Pallavicini, who has 60,000 acres. This is a big piece of land. The Count naturally wanted us to work his land. But he—like the other big lords—was only prepared to give us summer work. Such labour was not so easy to get, because the estates were too big; we had to travel from very far-away places, and everything we earned went on travelling expenses, or if we walked home after the harvest we lost even more weight. So the Count and the other big owners started to settle us on their estates. We were given a plot for a house and one or two acres of land in tenure. We came, and we built houses. We started to come after the Turkish wars were over. By the second half of the last century we had already built villages. Funny villages they were. The houses belonged to us—we inherited them from our fathers and grandfathers—but the land they were built on belonged to the Count or the lords.

Here we were, living in villages, in inherited houses of our own, thinking that the houses belonged to us. We had good reason for this. In 1873 they passed a law according to which the plots of our houses might be redeemed while the lease was a matter of agreement between us and the owners. This naturally meant that our villages also belonged legally to us settlers, and not to the owners of the estates. We were told so by priests, by newspapers, even by the gentlemen in Parliament *at that time*. But then the years passed and it turned out that our Count could not bear the loss of the few acres of our eight villages on his 60,000 acres. We were told to get out. We did not want to. So the gendarmes came and we were evicted. Next day we went back. We had nowhere to go, you see. Then the gendarmes came again, evicted us and razed our houses to the ground. The ruins were put on carts and taken away, then tractors came and transformed our villages into open fields. In our village, called Dóc, which was destroyed by the Count in 1926, they even destroyed the church.

The last act of destruction occurred in 1937.

These incidents started in the last century, about 1880. Hundreds of our villages were destroyed in this way.

103 We were homeless. Later we built new villages instead. Siróhegy (Weeping Hill), for instance. Or Bánomhegy (Hill of Sorrow). Or Kutyanyak. (This would mean in English

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"The village of Spite", though the literal translation is "Dog's Neck".) You'll find these villages on recent maps of the country of our lords.

There is a great deal of proof, if you don't believe us. In Bacska, in Southern Hungary, forty-five out of seventy-three settler-villages were destroyed with the assistance of the gendarmerie.

This was our last defeat. Of course the fight was not so simple. There was blood. Men get mad if their houses are destroyed and their wives and children are chased out into the cold and rain. But we don't want to overdo our complaining; this, our last defeat, we mention only so that you should not despise us for being so humble. We are not.

Some district is always at boiling point. Some district is quiet. It is the aftermath of one of our defeats. To fight we need strength. To have strong emotions we need strength.

Have you seen the old type of oil-lamp which our rich peasants use? It makes a bright light if it is turned full on. But if it is only half turned on, to save oil, the light barely flickers. Well, you see, after one of our defeats, after heavy losses and much hungering, our bodies are just like these half-turned-down oil-lamps. Life is barely flickering in our bodies. Our minds are dull. We can be slapped in the face, we can be kicked, we cannot do anything.

Then time passes. There is a better year. Somehow we can eat more. We put on weight. Life returns to us. We start to think, to want things. Slowly we get up enough strength to start a new fight—the fight for land, for food, for the good things.

This also makes for differences and variations among us. In some districts we are barely flickering, in others we are just preparing.

Now we have made sure that you realise there are different types and different ways of life among us.

But all of us, serfs and land-workers, migrating labourers and the rest, all have a common name in Hungary. We are "NINCSTELENEK". We don't know how to say this in your language. Literally it would mean the Nothing-Less, the People of Less than Nothing. Our language, which is very rich indeed in terms about the various shades of poverty, makes a distinction between those who have not got *anything* and those who have less than nothing.

There are about four million *Nothing-Less* in the country of our lords. We are telling you about ourselves. We should like to tell you how it came about that we live like this. So if you will give us leave, we will tell you our story.

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CHAPTER II

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WE HAVE TOLD you that we arrived in the ring of the Carpathian mountains as Attila's bearer slaves. Our lords will be very angry with us for saying this. They say that the Magyars came later from their ancient home in Central Asia.

It is true that there was a group of tribes which was driven from its home by other tribes during the Great Migration, and it is also true that these tribes reached the Carpathian range at the end of the ninth century. Our lords say that these tribes, who accepted the leadership of Arpad, founder of the first Hungarian royal house, were the Magyars. Arpad's nomadic horsemen, with all their families and slaves, numbered only 25,000 people. Now, it is not very probable that in a generation these 25,000 taught the population which they found here not only their la. guage, but also their pagan religion. The other fact is that the people who lived in the country after Attila cleared out and before Arpad arrived with his tribes called their language Magyar. It may be, of course, that Arpad's people were also Magyars.

Anyhow, after a century the entire country belonged to about a hundred persons. One half was the king's, the other the nobles'. So, supposing the original 25,000 were Magyars, they quickly became not only Magyars, but also slaves.

The people of Arpad—those 25,000 who conquered the country in 896—were good folks. They were pagan horsemen. Their religion was connected with sacrifices made to the White Horse. They lived on horseback. They put their meat under their saddle to make it soft and ate it without cooking. They fermented mare's milk and got drunk on it. They even had their "parliament" on horseback. The men of the families and tribes gathered on horseback to decide about pastures, herds—about all the questions which concerned them. They were quite barbaric in their ways. They had common ownership of pastures, fields, herds, horses. And they managed everything as a family manages its private affairs. Everyone had a say. In some of the tough "red" districts we are probably the descendants of these proud horsemen, who had a wider horizon from high up on horseback. Most of us are still good riders and some of us would still like to have some say in our affairs.

Hungary was at that time comparatively empty. The big central plain was one huge marshland. Around it were forests. In the east and the west there were good arable lands.

After taking the country, Arpad divided it up among the seven

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tribes. Between the territories of the tribes there were big free strips of land not belonging to any of them. They thought that they would stick to their system of common ownership, and they wanted the very wide separating strips to be there when the tribes grew. While the shepherds, craftsmen, slaves and womenfolk made themselves at home, the horsemen of Arpad started to raid the neighbouring countries to get more slaves and riches. They routed a German army near Vienna in 907, and for the next twenty-five years they terrorised Western Europe with raids, reaching the middle of Italy and France. In 955 they were beaten by the Germans of Emperor Otto and really started to settle down.

We came into the picture again. We had a good life in the beautiful country, so rich in fields, forests, game and fish. The forests and the rivers belonged to everyone. Even slaves could go out with their arrows or lines to get delicious things to eat. The herds grazed on the fat grass, we grew wheat, sacrificed to the White Horse and feasted often. There were no lords then. The tribes had leaders, but everyone was equal. It was quite natural then that everyone should eat his fill.

Then, about the beginning of this millennium, one of Arpad's successors, Vajk, learnt foreign ways. He grew ambitious. He became a Roman Catholic and took the name of Stephen. Later he became St. Stephen of Hungary, and our lords are very proud of him. Then our lot changed. Most of us—the proud horsemen, who had only recently arrived, and the former slaves of Attila—soon became tenant serfs.

St. Stephen hated the old ways. He destroyed the religion of the White Horse. He took personal possession of half the country, and the other half he gave to foreign nobles who helped him to beat the pagan tribesmen and generally all of us who did not want to change our old way of life. St. Stephen beat us. The commander-in-chief of his army was Wenczelin, Count of Wasserburg, and the army consisted mainly of Bavarian mercenaries.

The Pope and the Italian and German lords liked King Stephen. He made Christians out of pagans. But even according to our great historian Szilágyi, St. Stephen's wars "looked like German wars against the Magyars. Victory gave *them* the big estates and the valiant Magyars were thrown into abject slavery." With the help of the immigrant foreign priests, nobles, soldiers and adventurers, he transformed Hungary into a Catholic country; he put an end to the ancient custom of common ownership.

His chief aim was to make the power of the King strong against the Magyar tribes. He was a real mediaeval king. He did not bother about assimilation, language or such things. Not even

about the reign of his own kind, of his own nation. "His own kind" were the lords anyway, and there were no "lords" in this sense among the Magyars. So he founded the great Christian country, which was ruled by him, by foreign nobles and priests.

It took him and his successors more than a century to transform us into Christian serfs. We fought, too. We captured a German bishop, St. Gellert, put him into a barrel and kicked him down a mountain-side. The mountain bears his name to this day. We had many revolts. But great numbers of Bavarian soldiers came, and we were finally beaten. In our homes we clung for centuries to our old beliefs. But the countryside which was easily accessible to lord and priest became Christian. Our lords learnt Latin, and that was their language till 1830. "Magyar" was the language of the scum, of the people.

But our lot in those times was much better than it is today. This is not just the talk of the old ones who always think that ancient times were better times. No, our lot was better because there was more food, we had to work shorter hours and the tenants were mostly free to move. We had to give one seventh or ninth of the crop to the lords, one ninth to the Church, one tenth to the King. The rest was ours. We ate meat quite often. We were permitted to catch fish, and to shoot hares and other game with our arrows. If we were shepherds we were permitted to keep the sheep's milk and cheese because our foreign lords thought them uneatable, the food of serfs. Now they know better.

But more and more foreign priests and nuns came. Germans came to help the King to run the country. Though the country was very big, many of us could not get tenancy, and lived beyond the marshland, hunting and fishing.

On the big estates many *pusztas* were formed, and life on them soon became somewhat similar to our life today. The priests showed the lords how to treat us. They held their estates only for their lifetime. This was bad. Imagine that you become a bishop after being a hungry sort of a priest for many decades. Now you have got your big estate. Well, quite naturally you are eager to make the most of it—more eager than the lords who know that after them their sons will enjoy the estate. So the bishops made life a bit tougher for us. The estates belonging to the monasteries were no better. Students who visit us speak about a curious document dating from the twelfth century—a sort of accounts book of a monastery which had fifty-seven villages. There are some estate serfs mentioned. They had such names as Donkey, Stinky, Sleepy, Lazy, Filth, Ox and so on. Our lords and the priests gave us these names instead of our

own pagan ones. You can imagine what they thought of us, giving us such names.

We had to "robot"—that is, to do forced labour for our lords. After giving them their seventh, ninth and tenth of the produce, we had to labour on their lands, and for this labour we did not get anything. Our lot was worse than in other countries. In some epochs, for instance, we had to do three days a *week* forced labour for our lords, while under the same system in Austria the serfs had to "robot" only twelve days a *year*.

While we lived and worked on the *pusztas*, more and more foreigners arrived. They were wanted by the King and his lords. We think that the country was somewhat like a private firm or estate of the King and the aristocrats. They did what was good for the "firm" or the estates. Our students say that every feudal country was like the private firm of lords. So the King and his lords preferred those people who brought them most profit. The Saxons, for instance, whom they settled in Northern and Eastern Hungary, built towns and became merchants. They paid a lot of taxes. King Bela the Third got more taxes from the few Saxon towns in Transylvania than from thirty-six counties. In 1224 a royal decree placed the Magyars under Saxon rule in districts of the Saxon cities. King Bela the Fourth gave a privilege to the Saxon city of Korpona according to which "they must not accept the testimony of a Magyar (Hungarian) against a Saxon if another Saxon or German does not say the same". The Saxon and Germans got all the rights and privileges from the kings.

While Bela the Fourth was busy getting a lot of money from the Saxons, and the lords and priests were becoming richer and richer, the famous Tartar invasion started. Batu Khan, grandson of Jingiz Khan, attacked the country with his horde. The foreign soldiers preferred to fight against us, rather than against the Tartars. They were, anyway, very many and very strong. Batu Khan took the country in 1241, and massacred hundreds of thousands. The King and many of our lords went to foreign parts. It looked as if the Tartars would kill off all of us. Then the supreme Khan died somewhere far away in Asia. Batu Khan wanted to become his successor, so he departed with his horde. This time we profited by the lust for power of the great lords. We kept our lives.

King and lords returned. They brought new settlers. They gave a part of the country—the "*Barczasdg*"—to the German Order of Knights. The King created many new nobles, and gave them land. The nobles needed serfs. And they wanted more and more from us. They were not satisfied with the seventh or

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ninth and with our forced labour. They invented new customs. If a child was born to us we had to give "presents" to our lord. It was the same with a wedding. It became a custom to give the lords "presents" on important holidays. And our women-folk belonged to them. If we married a girl, the "first night" was the lord's. As many lords were elderly gentlemen and anyhow we were very many, in most districts we were permitted to give the lord some present instead of the virginity of our bride. In one district the lord had to be given a cheese as big as the bottom of the serf-bride. In other parts a piglet was the ransom.

This was already quite difficult, with the many presents, taxes, forced labour and so on. But as there were many new noble landlords, they started to resent the fact that we could move whenever it pleased us. So in most parts they passed laws forbidding us to move. Of course, we could go to the judge if the lord did something contrary to the law. But in the fourteenth century our lords had a new idea. *They became our judges too.* They got the right to behead us whenever it pleased them. This was bad. You have a quarrel with your employer, so you go to the law. And you find that the law is the very same employer.

At this time many of us lost our tenancy and became just land-workers who hired themselves out for casual work, living in villages, many a time not owning even a house.

Probably you think us very self-centred because we speak only about ourselves, and do not mention the names of kings or speak about their wars. Well, from the beginning of the eleventh century to the fall of Constantinople in 1453 Hungary was often attacked from the west by the Germans and from the east by the Mongols. Many of the wars were justified. There were many wars simply because of the covetousness of kings. In the fourteenth century the national dynasty of the Arpads came to an end and we got the Angevine-Naples as kings, who dragged us into the wars of Italy and France. They were not our wars. And mostly we did not fight them. Soldiering was a separate profession in those fortunate times.

You learn so much about the lords and their glorious deeds in history. Battles, dates and kings. You know all this better than we do. We know about ourselves. How we lived. We are interested in the daily life of folks. How they work. What they eat. Whether a person is free to go to some other place to find work or not. In our folk-tales, songs and fairy-tales we want important details. Did the person about whom the story is told live somewhere on the edge of marshland? During the winter,

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when there was less work, was he able to go in a little boat to the marsh, which he had known since childhood, and fish, catch things, lay traps, shoot game? Did he go barefoot? Did he know about many charms? Did he visit some aged "charmer" who still spoke with the Old God, Ukkon, the Ever-Lord? Did his women-folk weave? And how did they make colours? Did he have a big wedding feast?

Being curious in this way and listening a lot to our poets, we know what kind of a people we were at the end of the fourteenth century.

Our country was Christian. We were not. We prayed to the new God; we liked Christ—though we heard little about him—and loved Mary. But we knew that the Forest-Spirits, the Ever-Lord of the marshland, the Fairies, the Nightmare Witches who sit on your chest, the Iron-Nosed Witch, and many, many others were also very important. Some of us told the priests at confessionals that we sacrificed to one of these, or visited one of the Charmers, and then we had to say many prayers to the new God or we had to fast.

Christianity was more of a superstition with us. We were slowly losing our old beliefs and were not quite at home in the religion of our lords. We did not like the priests. They were covetous. Many of them were gluttons and lechers. Our lot became worse. Work grew harder. Our lords persecuted us more and more. We who lived on barter, who gave everything in kind to the King, the Church and the lords—wheat and barley and maize, and oat and milk and labour—now had to learn to sell and buy for money. We lost by selling and lost by buying. The merchants and the lords knew how to sell and buy. But we had to pay taxes in money. Buying and selling was bad enough; but then, our kings sometimes coined good money and sometimes bad. In the years when the King coined bad money we had to sell just as much as in "good-money years". But our lords and the Church accepted taxes only when we had good money. Even the King forgot to collect taxes in "bad-money years". There was King Sigismund, who always had financial difficulties. He sold many frontier villages to foreigners. Then he coined bad money.

We were uneasy and bewildered; full of worries. We did not know how to appease the land, the fields, the forests and marches; we did not know whether to be faithful to the old Gods, beliefs and ways, or the new. This was alarming enough. Then beheading. Then the prohibition to move about the country. Then buying and selling. Good coins, bad coins.

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Our tempers rose.

About the same time—as you well know—all over Europe people started to revolt against bad lords and bad priests. There were the Hussites in neighbouring Bohemia. Similar—nameless—heretical movements started among us. At night the preachers of the new faith carried the bread and water—Christ's body and blood—under their cloaks from house to house, village to village, *puszta* to *puszta*. The bread and wine were in small skins. Some of the wine dripped on to the ground. According to the priests, this was a great sin and sacrilege. But the thirsty soil avidly drank up Christ's blood as we drank in the words of the Bible which two good men translated into our language.

We liked the Bible. It brought Good News. It was a forbidden book, and we understood why. God did not want us to be slaves. *Christ was for us*. We drank our fill from the words of Christ. We were no longer bewildered. Our heads no longer reeled with worries. We no longer asked ourselves whom we should appease—priests, witches, charmers or forest-spirits? No, the Son of God who was the Son of Man spoke to us. A great power emanated from his simple speech which we understood well.

The King Sigismund who was also Holy Roman Emperor, the King who sold villages and coined bad money, grew alarmed. He hurriedly invited inquisitors to Hungary. In the market-places stakes were soon blazing. We knew that the Bible did not speak about stakes for those who read the Bible.

We revolted. The Hungarian Chronicle of Heltai says:

> "While Sigismund, Emperor and King, went to Germany to serve the Pope against the Czechs there were great revolts in Hungary. A peasant named Balázs, the mayor of one of the villages, rose and gathered a great peasant following. He went to the town of Szombathely and killed many of the [German] burghers. After this he inflicted blows all over Hungary. He ravaged the whole Matyusföld and destroyed many places throughout the country with firearms. Another village mayor, a peasant named Márton, backed by numerous serfs, murdered the nobles all over Nyirség and Szamoskœz."

These were local uprisings and our lords dealt with us. The great peasant revolution of the fifteenth century broke out in Transylvania, where our life had—until this time—been a bit better than in other parts.

This revolution was not caused by our sufferings and worries, not even by the many executions of Bible-readers. No, it was our King and a bishop who helped to make our blood boil.

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In 1433 King Sigismund had to pay for his coronation as Emperor. It cost a lot of money. Naturally he coined bad money. The Bishop of Transylvania, who ordered that the tithes should be paid in money instead of crops, refused to cash the tithes for three years when bad money was coined. Next year the King made good money and the Bishop wanted four years' tithes at once. We could not pay. The Bishop excommunicated those who failed to pay; we were forbidden to bury our dead in cemeteries, forbidden to marry in churches, forbidden to christen our children.

We still could not pay. So he ordered us to be burnt or put on the spit because of our stubbornness.

Fortunately at that time many of the lesser nobles lost much of their property or grew quite poor. They became the "common nobles" or "small nobles". Many of them lived in our villages. They were quite decent folk. In some cases they even talked our language instead of Latin. They read the Bible too. They came over to our side—only a handful of them, but they did. A good nobleman, Antal Budai Nagy, became our leader. Our rising started all over Transylvania and in northern Hungary. After a little while we thought that our lords would make peace.

We felt we ought to tell them what our conditions were. So we had a meeting to discuss and agree on our demands. We sent five serfs with our offer of peace as our negotiators. We said:

"The lords tread underfoot even our smallest right, and load us with unbearable burdens. For this reason we have gathered here on the Bábolna hill in Alparét to regain and re-establish our liberty, which was given by Hungary's holy kings to every inhabitant of this Hungarian home, and to shake off our heavy encumbrances after reciprocal consultation, and through our delegates we humbly request our lords to remove the unbearable yoke which enslaves us and to recognise our liberty accorded us by our holy kings."

These were our demands. Mind you, we were armed and very strong. But we still kept a civil tongue in our heads while addressing our lords. After we had "humbly requested them" to be human to us, we waited hopefully. Of our five delegates only one returned. He brought back in his satchel the heads of the other four.

This was the answer of our lords. Then all of us—joined by the Rumanian serfs in Transylvania, who are good folks like ourselves—rose together. Under Budai Nagy we won a great victory over our lords in 1437.

At Kolozsmonostor our representatives and those of our lords

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signed the peace treaty. It is a long treaty, with clumsy wording; we had better tell you only the gist of it. We aimed at becoming members of the Hungarian Nation as the Fourth Estate, side by side with the nobles, priests and German burghers. We wanted the King to coin good money. In case he would not, we wanted the priests and nobles to accept taxes from us every year, so that the burden of "bad-money years" should not rest solely on our shoulders. We wanted royal courts of appeal, so that our lords should not be able to behead us for a whim. We wanted our duties and rights in writing. How many and what kind of presents must we give to the lords? How much forced labour? And so on.

We were victorious, but we did not demand much. We were eager to work for our lords if they would only let a part of our crops be ours. We wanted safety from bishops and lords. The agreement said:

> "It is also decided, and shall be strictly carried out, that from now on every year, before Easter, two intelligent and reliable men from every *puszta*, estate and community shall come to the Bábolna Hill to meet before the leaders already named, or some of them, or newly appointed ones. There the leaders shall ask those men whether their lords have granted them their rights or not. And if they find that any noble has not fully or partly complied with these decrees set forth in the previous and following paragraphs, that noble should be considered a perjurer and other nobles should not assist in defending him."

We know now that we were behind the times. We were willing to remain serfs, even after our victory over the lords. Your serfs in England, sixty years earlier, had sung:

> "When Adam dolve and Eve span
> Who was then the gentleman?"

During the great rising of English serfs in 1381 they said:

> "The maters goeth not well to pass in England, nor shall not do till everything be common, and that there be no villeins nor gentlemen, but that we may be all equal, and that the lords be no greater masters than we be. What have we deserved or why should we be kept in serfage? We be all come from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve; whereby can they say or show that they be greater lords than we be, saying by that they cause us to win and labour for what they dispend?"

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Of course our modesty did not help us. Before we dispersed, the Bishop tried to persuade the small nobles to desert us. Some did, thereby weakening our military leadership. At the same time the Hungarian lords made a "brotherly agreement" with the Rumanian and Saxon lords and the Church against the Magyar (Hungarian) and Rumanian serfs and land-workers.

We had to go on fighting. Our lords organised themselves. They were joined, naturally, by the Saxon and Rumanian lords and were backed by the Bishop. We were joined by more Rumanian serfs—those who were chased to Transylvania by their lords when our lords chased us to Rumania. We were strong. The lords were stronger still, but they could not beat us. We concluded a new peace at Apáti. In this we lost much of what we had won in the former treaty. The only right which this treaty left us was the right to move wherever we wanted to. But we were again placed under the jurisdiction of our lords. We had the right to appeal against our own lord to the neighbouring lord. This would not have meant much in any case, but as the lords had just made their international treaty of brotherhood against us it meant even less.

We felt pretty desperate. As our lords demonstrated to us that they did not keep their word, we demanded that this new treaty should be sanctioned by the King-Emperor Sigismund. While the delegation went to him we remained armed.

Our lords did not wait for the return of the delegates. They again attacked us, in great force. In 1440 they finally beat us, torturing to death Antal Budai Nagy and the other leaders. Some of us escaped to the walled town of Kolozsvár. The lords laid siege, took it and then the massacre began. Burning, impaling. Magyar and Rumanian serfs were tortured to death by the thousand. The serfs captured in the big battle in which we were defeated had their right arms chopped off and sent home.

The leaders of the victorious armies met in Torda. The Saxon cities, which sent a big army to help our lords and the Rumanian lords, also sent representatives. The lords, priests and Saxons now made an alliance "against the Godless peasants".

We, Magyar and Rumanian peasants, lay prostrate. We lost more than the Rumanians. Not that the Rumanians were not good people. They were good. But while we were mostly land-workers, they were mostly shepherds. Their lot was not so bad, and many of them could go off to the mountains. So fewer Rumanians came to help us against the lords. The Catholic priests were also somewhat kinder to the Rumanians, hoping that they would leave their orthodox faith and pay tithes to them.

But the revolution of 1437 was our common work, and together we were beaten. Then their lot became in some cases worse than ours. Our lords detested the common people. But they hated the Rumanians even more for their foreign ways and faith and language.

Our lot was worst in Transylvania. The lords were intent on putting us down. They beheaded us for the least offence. They took away our crops. Out of spite they did not permit us to marry the girl we wanted to.

What could we do? Some of us escaped into neighbouring Rumania, many of us moved to the west. Our lords, seeing that they had overdone their persecution and almost emptied Transylvania of us, invited new Rumanian serfs. They were happy to come, foolishly thinking that the lords here would be better than their own lords.

So the Transylvanian question was born.

CHAPTER III

OUR LORDS say that we are shrewd. They are annoyed with us because in some things we are so stupid and then, when it is important that we should be stupid, we are not.

We feel we must mention this subject because perhaps you wonder how we come to think and know about the things which we tell you.

It is in this way. We are used to tools; used to things. Fine talk does not help if you want to get results from the soil. You have to understand it and have the tools to work it.

We don't use our brains as much as you do. But we use our brains as *tools*.

We haven't got such a treasure-house of knowledge in our skulls as gentlemen who have bought it in expensive colleges. But we are interested in the past. How people lived. How things came to this sad state.

In times gone by we learnt from the old people, from the Charmers, from the *regös*. These were wandering bards. They travelled from place to place. Each evening they arrived at a different *puszta* or village and sang us their rhymes. They turned all the important news into rhyme. These *regös* were former serfs. You should know that till this very day we have always loved to make poems. We made countless poems, for instance, about the bad Count Pallavicini and how he destroyed our

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villages. There are poems about everything: simple poems with very exact wording. 175

These poems tell us about old times. Then books Students who visit us. Our leaders.

And of course we are not interested in long words which do not mean a thing. Things are what you can touch. Or orders and restrictions. Laws. A new system does not mean anything to us until we know that as a result there will be more gendarmes or less. Will the gendarmes whip us if we try to make the landlord keep his word? How much wheat shall we have to pay for a pair of boots?

To us these things are important. We think about them.

We are beating a lot about the bush because we must tell you now about our very great revolution—the Dózsa revolution. And we would like to explain why it happened, how it happened.

In 1514 our lords roasted Dózsa on a white-hot iron throne and forced us to eat his flesh.

This, and everything we are about to tell you, happened because of the soil; because of "development"; because our relation to the soil and to our lords had changed.

How shall we explain this?

Oh, yes. Listen:

There are motor-cars in the cities which our lords hire when they want to go somewhere. A little machine watches the distance and shows how much money must be paid. One of our leaders—in a desperate mood—said we should watch out. Soon such machines would be placed in our mouths, measuring the air we breathed. And we would have to pay for it.

Preposterous, isn't it? Well, there was a time when it was considered just as preposterous that the land should be measured. One was born into a family, into a clan, into a tribe. The tribe had cattle. The steppes and forests and meadows were there for the taking. One had a horse for personal use. A tent. The women-folk had things to cook in.

Later, when we changed over to a settled life, our original equality slowly disappeared. The lords had to fight for the king. We had to give some of the crops we produced to our lords. Even at this time our lords did not know that one can "own" the land, just as nowadays nobody yet thinks about "owning" the air. They had private property, or personal property: animals, cattle, horses.

Someone had to till the soil. We were there on the soil. We tilled it. We belonged to the soil. The soil belonged to us. This was natural then. Just as natural as it became later that there

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should be great lords to whom we had to give some of our crop. This was the system.

Our lords did not know any other system. Then foreigners came who already understood that the soil can be "owned". Our own lords were not jealous when the kings "gave them the land". Our lords understood by this that the king allotted them a district where their herds could graze and where the serfs had to work partly for them.

But the foreigners knew better. And by the time our lords discovered what was happening, most of the country had become the personal property of the foreign lords. But *we* were still working on the land, we were still more like tenants and less like slaves.

Then there were those of us who somehow did not belong to the soil. Such a serf without land was neither free nor bound. He simply did not count. He was constantly in great danger of becoming a slave. A slave was a kind of property, like a horse or a hog rather than a person.

Those of us who "simply did not count"—that is, who were neither serfs nor slaves—became hired land-workers, craftsmen, beggars, wandering poets, soldiers, bandits.

Many soldiers were needed because the Turks took Constantinople and threatened Hungary.

Amidst wars, changing systems—from barter to money, from tenancy to a new kind of serfdom—our lot grew slowly worse. It is true that in 1445 they gave us back in some part the right to move about. Many new nobles were made. Eight thousand Rumanians were ennobled by our kings for services rendered. The new nobles needed serfs. So again a law was passed that after paying all our taxes, tithes and debts we might go to work for some other lord.

The life of our lords changed too. There were very poor nobles, living in villages and fretting for their earlier glory. These were mainly Magyars. There were the new nobles with their new estates. And there were great lords who became the little kings of a district. They were called oligarchs. These oligarchs were constantly craving for power and threatening the position of the King.

At this time the small nobles, who all had a right to vote—they had nothing but this right—elected Matthias Hunyadi as their King. This Matthias was the son of an oligarch who was a great soldier and had often beaten the Turks.

Now, this Matthias was a very clever man. He saw that we are not so bad if nicely treated. So he treated us well, defend-

ing us against the great lords. We called him "Matthias the Just".

He made it possible for us to appeal to his court against the law-courts of our lords. He ensured that we should be free to move. He forbade the lords "to treat the serfs villainously; to invent new taxes after they had expressed a wish to leave the estate; to treat them wickedly, taking away their cattle for imaginary debts". He even dressed himself as a serf and walked about the country to see that his laws were carried out.

He saw, for instance, that after the harvest our lords sent their bailiffs to ascertain how big a crop we had. For this they levied a separate tax. Now Matthias made the following law. "The serf must take the oath on the size of his crop. If the bailiff does not believe him, he can investigate it. If it turns out that the serf cheated, his crop can be taken away. If the bailiff was wrong in his suspicion, the serf may take away the bailiff's horse. For this reason, before investigation the bailiff and his assistants must put their horses in the serf's stable."

Then he brought a law "against divers wicked priests who, being not content with their lawful income, charge extra four gold pieces for the funeral of murdered people and think out new extra fees all the time".

Matthias was a clever man. By making us stronger he weakened the big lords. He needed us as a sort of counterbalance. But he was humane and just. When he died, the countryside mourned. For centuries to come we had a proverb: "King Matthias died and justice died with him".

Things grew worse. We slowly became "property". First the animals, then the slaves, later the soil—it was our turn now to become property. This process was interrupted under Matthias the Just. After his death, under weak foreign kings and intriguing lords and priests, in many places we practically became "property" —that is, slaves. You see, the great nobles, the oligarchs, fought each other, fought the King, fought the small nobles and fought the priests. Everyone schemed against everyone else. Each party craved power.

The oligarchs who had much power wanted more, and the small nobles who had none wanted some. But they each and all agreed on one thing: to keep us down, to make property out of us.

During the last decades of the fifteenth century a series of laws was introduced which made our situation worse. At first our freedom of movement—given back to us by Matthias—was conditioned by certain formalities. Afterwards lords who em-

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ployed escaped serfs were punished. Later the lords themselves prohibited the right of free movement even on their own estates.

For there were already big estates. In Matthias' time Hungary had a population of five million. Four million were Magyars, mainly serfs. You can imagine the extent of some of the estates when we tell you that one oligarch, Szapolyai, had nearly 500,000 serfs, while another noble, Werböczi, the nastiest of them all, had 600,000 acres.

The small nobles, who wanted a Magyar king again instead of foreigners, were also determined to put us down. In 1492 they held a parliament and voted for the law taking away our freedom of movement and generally making our lot very bad. Werböczi of the 600,000 acres, being a great lawyer, composed the resolution, which ended like this:

"Those who act against these laws must be placed under the yoke of eternal slavery and peasantry and must bear the punishment for their crime for ever."

In their minds, as you see, "slavery and peasantry" were the same thing.

Why did these small nobles, most of whom had neither serfs nor land, act like this?

Szapolyai, the most powerful oligarch, wanted to be king. His chief adviser was Werböczi. They were both Magyars. So were the small nobles. They hoped that Szapolyai, after he became king, would chase away the foreign nobles and give them their land and serfs. They were sure to get a part of the nation, so they wanted to secure the income of it.

In 1514 the Pope planned a European campaign against the Turks—a big crusade. He commissioned the Archbishop of Hungary to organise it. Priests and monks went all over the country telling us that the Pope wanted us to fight the Turk. The monks talked like this: "A father retaining his son or a son keeping back his father from this salutary undertaking will invoke the wrath and curse of Almighty God".

We were told to gather in the fields of Rákos, near Buda, and in various camps in the country. We came. Some were filled with enthusiasm to sew the great red cross of the crusade on their breasts. Some came because they had as yet no families and anything was better than slavery. Some because others went—it was the thing to do. Some because their lords did not want them to go. They wanted their serfs; they did not give a tinker's curse for the crusade. They stayed away themselves.

The fields of Rákos and the other camps were filled with us. Ten, twenty, thirty thousand came, and more were still coming.

Our lords became alarmed, and, Holy Crusade or no Holy Crusade, they started to send armed men after us when we left the estates. For the sake of making an example they tortured a few of us to death. But there were nearly 50,000 of us on Rákos, and they could not come after us all.

The Archbishop made George Dózsa the commander-in-chief of the crusade.

George Dózsa was a Székely noble who had distinguished himself as a soldier in the wars against the Turks.

The Székelys had inhabited the mountainous parts of Transylvania probably since Attila's time Under the so-called "Horse head" chieftains *, for a very long time they kept their ancient tribal ways of living. Common ownership of the land by the villages and the old equality was still the system in these days, and the Székely nobles owned only perhaps twice as big a piece of land as the commoners.

The Székelys are the most independent-minded, shrewd and tough among us. Their Magyar speech is as fully flavoured as a nut or an apple. They tell beautiful fairy-tales. Their folk-tales are full of humour and wit. Their favourite sport is the matching of wits. They give each other puzzles to solve. They make up the puzzles themselves. A person's worth is decided not only by the piece of land he owns and by his strength, but also by his brains. You have to be very shrewd, witty and tough indeed to be first among the Székelys.

Young George Dózsa was first among the best of the fighting Székelys. He had an enormous reputation as a conqueror of the Turks. He had great courage. He spent his youth fighting the vicious Janissaries on the southern frontiers.

Well, in 1513 the Turks were getting stronger. They not only menaced Hungary, but were ambitious to take the whole of Europe. The Pope and the great kings grew frightened. They organised the big Crusade. This was not meant to be an old-fashioned Crusade. It was really a planned defence of Eastern and Central Europe.

We were supposed to fight. And the Poles. And the Croats.

Anyhow, the Archbishop of Hungary made George Dózsa leader of the Crusade.

We looked upon Dózsa as belonging to us. He had fought a lot and was quite poor. He was one of the brave Székelys who had been terribly persecuted by our lords ever since the revolt of Antal Budai Nagy. The Székelys defended themselves in their mountain villages. Stephen Bátory, one of the worst of

* This was a name going back to our old pagan religion.

*175 *566 our lords, hated the Székelys like poison. He hated them because they considered themselves as belonging to the Hungarian nation—though the nation consisted only of lords. He hated them because even the Székely nobles spoke Hungarian, the language of the serfs. He hated them because they were of independent mind. He hated them because they were generally considered the best Hungarian stock, having a reputation like that of the Scotch Highlanders in Britain. Bátory chased many Székelys into Rumanian Moldava and other neighbouring parts. His slogan—according to the historian Acsády—was: "It is better that stinking carcases should rot on the Székely lands than that Székelys should dwell on them".

The Székelys were hated by our bad lords. So we loved them. We wanted to be like them. We adored Dózsa.

On St. George's day, April 24th 1514, in the St. Sigismund Church of Pest, the red cross was sewn on the breasts of Dózsa and his ten sub-lieutenants, and the Archbishop handed over the flag which the Pope had blessed in Rome.

Dózsa started work at once. He knew—or at least he thought he knew—that Europe was watching us, that it was our task to defend Europe against the barbaric Turks. He made plans for our training. We started to train. We were taught how to march, how to handle our weapons, how to fight. Some of us had swords. Some of us had only the long-handled Hungarian scythe straightened out like a lance.

In those times—as you know—there were two types of soldiers: nobles fighting for their country or district, or feudal lords—and mercenaries. We were not mercenaries. We were told to fight for a cause. Somehow we began to believe that those who fight, and fight well, will not be slaves any longer. We thought this was the reason why our lords did not want us to go.

We were eager to join Dózsa. We were eager to fight the Turks. But our lords grew alarmed. They looked upon the Crusade from the beginning with misgiving. They accused the Archbishop of having personal ambitions to satisfy. This was probably true. But it was also true that the Turks were at the gates.

Our lords started to sabotage the Crusade in many ways. In the middle of May we were already 40,000 strong, and people were still pouring in, bringing bad news from home. "The lords", reads a contemporary pamphlet, "started to seize their serfs, severely punishing them . . . killing those bearing the red cross of the crusade . . . footmen were castrated." In other parts the lords made it known that they would torture the family of any serf who escaped to join the Crusade against the Turks.

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X175 X566 We heard this news, and we had proofs too. Then the big lords used their influence with the weak foreign King of Hungary to starve us out. The camps did not get food. Dózsa did not get the promised financial backing.

Our camps were boiling with rage. We were hungry. We were worried about our families. Rumours came about the growing strength of the Turks. Poor priests, monks, students, small nobles were living with us in our camps. They spoke to us. They spoke about our lords.

But it was not necessary to teach us. Everything was as clear as day. The lords did not want us to save the country, for then we should have rights in it. The right to be free; to own some land; to keep our wives and daughters from the lords' beds; to become men, and not be beasts under the yoke.

The biggest and most important camp was at Rákos, near Pest. Dózsa was there. Dózsa was a simple soldier. He knew the Turks. He knew that they wanted to take the country. He wanted to defend it. He was not a revolutionary, only a simple and decent man. But our lords enlightened him quickly enough. He knew what the game was about.

On May 14th the army was ordered to leave for Croatia to relieve the besieged castle of Knin. Our lords were hoping that, badly armed and underfed as we were, the Turks would kill off enough of us to make us meek and accept their next order: to disarm and go home and be serfs again.

Now we were ripe for revolt. Loerincz Mészáros, Vicar of Czegléd, who was a sort of people's priest, delivered a speech against the order, against our lords.

"They have been sucking our blood for such a long time, and now they hide and do not dare to fight for our home against the Turks. Let us rise against those frogs."

The Vicar of Czegléd wasn't a poor priest, but he was a patriot: one of those who really thought that Hungary was our home; that we all belonged to the nation. There were many decent small and even fairly prosperous nobles who joined our army. They saw who the enemies of the country were. They wanted to fight for the country of free people. They wanted to fight for justice. And they wanted to fight the Turks.

The German burghers of the towns were with the big nobles against us. In many places they tied a red cross on the tail of a donkey and paraded through the streets. If they caught a stray Crusader they impaled him. Our families were tortured. We were hungry.

Now Dózsa gave the order to rise against our lords. He saw

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that he had to beat them before he could turn against the Turks.

In the city of Czegléd, Dózsa made his first speech. By then he had learnt his lesson. The simple soldier who was used to facing and understanding a given situation now clearly became the leader of the people.

Read his speech:

"Nothing is more obnoxious to our Heavenly Father than that one man should reign over another. Slavery is not natural. It was created by the injustice of fate and the covetousness of men. There is no greater sin than to keep men, and especially compatriots, in merciless slavery. The Hungarian nobility do not look upon you as fellow-citizens but as slaves. They are as hostile to you as if they had subjugated you in fierce fighting. They almost grudge you the sunshine, which, after all, shines on beast and man alike. They even grudge you your soul, and let you keep it only because without it you could not live. You produce the crops for them, tend the cattle for them, grow wine grapes for them, weave cloth for them—and you get only slavery and misery. You know all this from bitter experience. Whatever a noble does you have to pay for it. You have to give forced presents if a noble is born, if he gets married, if his children marry, if he travels to the Court on his own affairs, if he builds a house, if he dies. His holidays are your days of mourning. Even his mourning is more bitter to you because you have to pay for it. And what they want most—money—they get from you. They grow big and influential on your money so as to be able to fight other nobles for the right to sweat you.

"How long shall we Magyars suffer these indignities? Was it for this that that famous King Attila led us out from the Northern mountains? Was it for that that he, the subjugator of Europe, led us hither? To serve the pride and lust of the few? To make the few rich and powerful while we lost even the hope of freedom?

"Rise, Magyars; follow God, our lord, the creator of your freedom, who to the confusion of your enemies united you and armed you. Your enemies, these weaklings, the luxurious lechers, would not believe that you would try to throw off the yoke from your shoulders. Teach these effeminate ones to live in equality with their serfs and fellow-citizens and that they should not reign with their unbearable pride.

"Seize the opportunity now to fight for your liberty. Take care that God has no cause to be angry with you for not taking the chance offered to you.

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"I am with you, will fight with you for liberty and against your enemies in any rank you give to me."
We called him "King of the Peasants".

The entire country was in a turmoil. In some parts the nobles were besieging small Crusaders' camps. In others Dózsa's armies were besieging cities held by the nobles. The countryside was full of danger. If detachments of the lords caught stray groups of Crusaders, they tortured them to death. Small punitive expeditions of serfs went to places where the lords tortured the families of fighters. Thousands of lords and thousands of fighters were massacred.

Meanwhile Dózsa made a last attempt to bring our lords to their senses. He sent a letter to Buda to the Crown Council. It was a long letter, written in the manner of those times. The gist of it was this:

1. The Turks are threatening Hungary.
2. Only a big army can save her.
3. His army, the people's army, is willing to make peace with the lords if they will agree to the re-examination of our old laws and the restitution of the rights granted to the people by our kings. After that they should join him, and we would move together against the Turks.

Our lords were not willing to give us back our old rights and they were not willing to join us in the field against the Turks. They speedily recruited armies against us. They hired German mercenaries, they recruited soldiers in the Hungarian towns given to the Germans, they used their private armies. The Archbishop sent a letter to Dózsa saying that he declared the Crusade to be at an end. The Apostolic Holy Letter announcing the Crusade was not valid. The very same priests who were entrusted to enunciate it must take it back—otherwise they would be excommunicated. Everyone continuing with the Crusade would be excommunicated. Dózsa must send his armies home.

Our leader, who already had 120,000 men under arms and who had heard most alarming news about the Turks, grew terribly angry. He roared to the Archbishop's emissary:

"I am neither a child nor a madman to be played with like this. I swear by God and by the Holy Cross that I will destroy you."

The people's revolution became a people's war. Our lords sent armies against us. The first armies were beaten. Then they wanted to get foreign help. (They always do this.) They wanted

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to ask the German Emperor and the Polish King to help. But Dózsa's armies were besieging important cities. The foreign help, they feared, would come too late. So they implored Janos Szapolyai, the big oligarch of Transylvania, to hasten to their aid. Szapolyai came with powerful armies.

We do not want to bore you with the story of our battles. For a long time we were victorious everywhere. Then we lost a battle or two. Then the nobles and bishops played their usual treacherous tricks on Dózsa. They sent their agents into our armies. They started to parley, and then broke their word. And at long last the mighty armies of Szapolyai beat us in armed combat.

Dózsa knew that Szapolyai wanted to be king of Hungary. He also knew that Szapolyai's Transylvania was in great peril from the Turks. So when Szapolyai sent him a letter stating that he wanted to join the Crusaders with his army, Dózsa showed willingness to negotiate.

While other divisions of our army fought against the German Count George of Brandenburg, who owned the entire county of Békés, and against the united armies of the Hungarian and Rumanian nobles and the privileged Saxon towns of Hungary, Dózsa, with his main army, awaited Szapolyai near Temesvar. His armies were already too near to ours when Dózsa realised that Szapolyai intended to attack him. He was beaten.

In the battle 20,000 of us were killed. Dózsa was taken prisoner. Our lords prepared a spectacular end for the King of the Peasants.

While they had an iron throne and crown made for Dózsa, his imprisoned foot soldiers were not given anything to eat for two weeks. Many perished. But some were still alive, half-mad with hunger, when, on July 20th 1514, our nobles instructed the gipsy executioners to make a big fire under the iron throne until it was white-hot. They had the white-hot iron crown for the Peasant King ready also. Then they placed our leader on the white-hot iron throne, put the white-hot iron crown on his head and forced his soldiers to eat his roasted flesh.

Bishop Vernacsics—one of the enthusiastic spectators of this scene—wrote in his diary:

> "The gipsies played gay music. The soldiers were chased round Dózsa's throne and were prodded with swords to make them eat his flesh. After each round the soldiers' mouths were examined. If the mouth of any of them was not red with blood he was killed at once."

King Ulászló of Hungary sent the following account of these events to the Emperor Maximilian:

X175
X566 "George Székely (Dózsa) was first crowned with a burning iron crown, and afterwards while still alive he was tied to an iron throne and torn to pieces and devoured by his own soldiers, commonly known as 'Haiducks' (foot-soldiers), called by him either in fun or seriously 'beasts': finally his body was cut into four pieces and put on the spit."

So perished our leader. Now it was our turn. Seventy thousand of us all over the country were killed in various nauseating ways. Some parts of our armies, which were still fighting, were beaten by Serbian armies called in by our lords to help. The Serbs did not know what they were doing, because their lords told them lies.

The nobles decided that our families must be punished too. Szapolyai thought that these serf-women and children whose husbands and fathers took part in the revolution were too dangerous to live. Many thousands were massacred; the rest were put into well-guarded camps and starved to death.

Later, when their lust for revenge was partly satisfied, if they caught any of the former Crusaders they burned on their foreheads a cross to remind them for a lifetime of the only peasant crusade in Hungary.

The Holy Cross, the "Crux", became the symbol of resistance. We cannot pronounce it Crux, so we changed the word into "*Kuruc*". For centuries, till this very day, we have called ourselves *Kuruc*. As our great nobles were mostly of German origin and later served the German Habsburgs, *Kuruc* also has an anti-German meaning.

Well, we, the *Kuruc*, were beaten.

But our lords had not finished with us yet. Their great law-giver, Werbőczi of the 600,000 acres, evolved the theory that our revolution was *the original sin of the Hungarian serfs and peasants.*

He prepared a new book of law which was accepted by the State Assembly in 1514, *sentencing us to eternal and actual slavery.*

This new system of legislation raised an iron barrier between one Hungarian and another. We, the people, were "tied to the earth" and shackles were put on us. The code of Werbőczi, accepted by the State Assembly, announced that by our original sin we had lost all our rights and had only duties.

According to this code all the burdens of State, all taxation, all work had to be done by us. The nobles were free from taxation or any duties whatsoever.

Said the new code:

"The memory and punishment of their treachery must be visited on their descendants, so that all mankind should know

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what a sin it is to rise against the lords. Therefore in this country all the peasants have lost their liberty by which they may move wherever they want to. *They are placed under eternal servitude to their landlords.*"

So the "original sin" of humanity was legally transferred on us by our lords.

In 1526 came the national catastrophe of Hungary. In the battle of Mohács the Turks beat the Hungarian armies and took most of the country, keeping it under their reign for 150 years.

Twenty-seven thousand instead of three hundred thousand men faced the Turks at Mohács. Need we point out to you that if our lords had consented to give us back our original rights, and Dózsa's armies had fought at Mohács, the fate of the battle and of Hungary would have been different?

CHAPTER IV

OUR FOLK-TALES always have a lesson in them. Dózsa's tale is full of lessons.

The great oligarch, Szapolyai, reached Mohács too late with his armies to beat the Turks. He was not too late to beat us.

The King asked for help against us from the Duke of Munsterberg. He did not ask for help against the Turks.

Our lords wanted us to be slaves and excluded us from the nation. By doing this they lost the greater part of their nation for a century and a half. They called us traitors. Were they good patriots?

Moreover, it seems that they did not know even how to work for their own interests. In their blind hatred of us, they destroyed their country. Have not similar things happened all over the world, all through history, till quite recent times?

But to get on with our story. Between our defeat in 1514 and the great catastrophe of Hungarian history in 1526 our punishment was being meted out to us. Committees of nobles toured the counties and visited our houses. The nobles of the neighbourhood went with them. If a noble said that a cow, a piglet, or a chest of drawers was taken from him during the revolution, the committee gave it to him. In this way our lords took from us everything that they wanted.

The King announced a special national tax for repaying "the losses" of Szapolyai. This was his reward for beating us.

We were prostrate, so everybody seized the opportunity to get

rich quickly at our expense. The big priests imprisoned the small priests who had fought with us, and took away their belongings. The big lords punished the small lords who had joined our cause, taking away their land and in many cases their nobility. The yes-man Count of Brandenburg, who owned a large part of Central Hungary, was rewarded by the King for fighting Dózsa. During the reign of King Matthias (the Just) a few free townships emerged on the central plain of Hungary. Their privileges were taken away and they were given to the German Count.

We became complete slaves. But a slave is also a kind of domestic animal: it has value for its lord. So lords intriguing against each other tried to hurt their enemies by killing off their property—us.

1514–1526 was the period of widespread massacres, of coining bad money, of robbing the countryside. And what a state the countryside really was in! Imagine the little bands of bewildered *Kuruc* who, with a cross burned into their foreheads, roamed the forests. Simple serfs who only a year ago had worked in their fields now became hunted brigands. Many of us really became brigands. We lost our homes. Our families were tortured to death. We knew that if our lords caught us we should be burnt. So we became wolves—cruel brigands. Death did not mean much to us. If we caught a lord we treated him in the most inhuman way we could think of.

Our numbers grew. Our lords forbade the shepherds to carry arms. But in such a situation they had to be armed if they wanted to keep their cattle. So they hid their weapons. If they were caught, their right arms were chopped off and they were kicked out by our lords. They learnt to fight with their left arm and joined the brigands: the looting, raping "*hajducks*".

Many of us attempted to escape—emigration. At first we succeeded, just as the Transylvanians succeeded in emigrating after our 1437 revolt. Now we went to Poland, Rumania, Austria. We wanted to work in peace. We accepted any conditions, just to escape from our lords.

But after a while they grew alarmed lest the country should be emptied, so they asked the neighbouring kings to close their frontiers against us. Hundreds of families had to turn back from the closed frontiers. These families could not return to their "homes", because they were fugitive slaves. Many perished, many led a nomad existence in the forests of the Carpathians.

All this time the Turks were on the frontiers. The ambassador of the Pope, Baron Burgio, watched the situation with growing

alarm. In one of his reports to the Pope he pointed out that our lords treated us as their worst enemies. "What would happen," he wrote, "if the Turks were to promise freedom to the Hungarian serfs; what would happen if the Hungarian serfs were to get help from a great Power?"

We did not get it. No great Power ever helped us. The Turks knew well enough that they could beat our lords, engrossed in their everlasting quarrels, and that the lords would not let us help them to defend the country.

For many of us were still willing to help. The Székelys on the frontiers of Transylvania wanted to fight. The people of Southern Hungary wanted to fight. But our lords decided that only nobles might bear arms.

Our lords, after beating us, turned against the King. There was a danger that the King might back us against our lords. And they, our lords, wanted security in their victory. They schemed all the time for a stable government which could ensure their power and our everlasting slavery. As such lords are apt to do, they formed leagues, each scheming to sell the country to a different foreign Power. Some negotiated with the Habsburgs, some with the Germans. Some wanted to ensure their rule over us under a Polish king; again, others thought that a republic of nobles under Turkish protection would serve their interests best.

King Louis II—also a foreigner—said at this time that he feared the "Turks inside" more than the real Turks. Nowadays these lords would be called Fifth Columnists or Quislings.

Of course not all our lords were bad. There were many small nobles, and even big ones, who were real patriots, who hated the Turks more than they hated us, who were prepared to liberate us. But they were in a minority. The average person, after all, pursues his own interests, the interests of his family. Only very enthusiastic people can forget the interests of their kind and care for other things, such as religion and country. The average lords behaved as they were brought up to behave.

In 1525 the soldiers of the southern frontiers came to the King to ask for money. They had not been paid for many years, they were starving, they had no ammunition. The King was very poor. Many a time, in order to have food for the castle, he had to pawn his silver cutlery to the Jews of Buda. Our lords took everything for themselves; the King was poor. He could not pay. He asked the big lords, who had just grown very rich on us, to pay the soldiers. They refused. The delegates of the frontier guards waited a month, then they went away. They said, "We cannot serve any more. This is the end of Hungary."

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Next year, at Mohács, the small army of our lords, 27,000 strong, was beaten. The Turks took two-thirds of Hungary. Transylvania elected Szapolyai king. The western and north-western strip of Hungary was ruled by the Habsburg Ferdinand. Buda also fell to the Turks.

For most of us this meant a change of master. Unfortunately the Turkish Pashas, Beys and Begs had also only one aim: to get rich as quickly as possible. Now our women went into their harems instead of being used by our own lords. Many of our boys were kidnapped and taken to Constantinople to be trained as Janissaries.

The frontiers between Turkish-occupied and Habsburg-occupied Hungary fluctuated constantly. For a century and a half there were the "fighting frontiers" of the West. Now many of our lords under Habsburg rule permitted us to fight for them. Habsburg-occupied Hungary could call as much of the country its own as it could hold by force of arms.

In a way this was a heroic age. The battle-torn frontiers produced many heroes among our lords and among us. For a century and a half we were defending Europe against the Turks. We do not want to brag. If you open any impartial history book, it will tell you about this.

Remember, please, we are telling you a little about *our* history, not that of Hungary. We have become as obstinate as mules throughout the centuries, and our obstinacy makes it difficult for us to speak about the Hungary of our foreign lords, and our kings with their love of foreigners, as *our* country. We always dream that some day she will become *our* country. We mean to make a decent country out of her.

But when two-thirds of Hungary was occupied by the Turks we soon found out that the Turk was our enemy: he wanted to take away our language! Our resistance started. We flocked to the frontier castles of the western and northern Hungarian lords. We fought the Turk. For a century and a half we left him no peace. The Habsburgs, who also occupied the throne of the German–Roman Empire, were foreign to the country. They provided small groups of German mercenaries to help in resisting the Turks, but never enough to expel them from the land. These German soldiers likewise despoiled us, as the Turks did in occupied territories. The terrible destruction of Turkish-occupied Hungary primarily affected us, the Hungarian serfs, inhabitants of the Lowlands, where thousands of villages disappeared altogether. The forests between the Danube and Tisza were destroyed. The Turks flooded part of the Lowlands with marshes.

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Our lot in Transylvania was not much better. There Szapolyai, our great enemy, reigned. Some of the big nobles revolted against him—they even got together an army against him. Szapolyai beat them, as he had beaten Dózsa. The leaders of this revolt against King Szapolyai were two great nobles, Majláth and Balassa. They did not want to fight the Turks, as we wanted to under Dózsa. They just wanted to depose Szapolyai. After their defeat the two leaders were brought to Szapolyai. He forgave them, and restored their swords to them. Their armies were not punished either. Even the right to revolt seems to be the privilege of the lords.

Szapolyai's son, the next King of Transylvania, went on with his father's work. The Székelys still had some degree of freedom. They still had common ownership of their fields. They had their arms. Szapolyai II made them serf-slaves like us.

This was the age—as you know well—of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and of the Thirty Years' War. As the Habsburgs were Catholics, we mostly became Calvinists and Unitarians. We called Calvinism "the Hungarian religion". The story of how Catholic monarchs persecuted their Protestant subjects is well known. In our case this persecution also had a political and national aspect. Calvinism was our means of resistance against the German-Catholic Habsburg rule.

For various reasons, complete liberty of conscience was declared in Transylvania in 1568. This was quite exceptional in the age of religious hatred. Protestantism and religious tolerance generally were defended in many minor and some major wars by princes and kings of Transylvania. They fought on the side of the Protestant rulers against the Habsburgs, so the Turks did not bother them much.

Not all our lords, however, were against the Turks. Do you remember Werböczi of the 600,000 acres—the man who sentenced us to eternal slavery for our "original sin"? He offered his services to the Turks and became the chief "Hungarian" judge of the Turkish-occupied area. His death was really like the "moral" of a folk-tale. This lord, who was always craving for riches, and who managed every year to wangle and beg for himself a dozen or more villages from the King, grew enormously fat in his old age. The Turkish Pasha of Buda learned about an underhand deal of his, so he invited him to supper and poisoned him. The poison made Werböczi's fat body black and bloated, and when he finally died he looked like a gigantic toad.

During the seventeenth century Hungary was the battleground of German, Turkish, Habsburg, Tartar, Lithuanian and Polish

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armies. Various lords fought each other. We revolted a number of times, some of our lords quickly turning our revolts into wars of liberty against the Habsburg kings. The country decayed. Imagine about 600 miles of quite wide frontier belts where for 150 years waging war is a part of everyday existence. Imagine punitive expeditions by the Turks into the various Hungarian territories; punitive thrusts by our frontier garrisons into Turkish-occupied country. A small band of horsemen sweep over the countryside, burning villages, hamlets, farms, taking away the cattle, raping, kidnapping women and small boys. Minor adventures for the people at war. But each such minor adventure meant lost homes for us. It meant families destroyed. It meant that one joined the brigands. The Turks come—and go. You stand in the courtyard. The empty stable is burning. Your hut is burning. Your children have been taken away. Your wife is crying, your parents wailing—the wail of old serfs. What can you do? You just go away, go blindly into nowhere, forgetting everything. Sorrow and rage are left. If you chance on a frontier castle you try to join the frontier fighters. If you chance on a band of robbers, you join them. Then at night, in the brigand camp, you get roaring drunk. Next day you are a brigand. And when you hear about a revolt anywhere—let's say that the great prince Rákóczi has joined the *Kuruc* and wants to make Hungary a free country—you join the *Kuruc* camp. Then you are a soldier, a hero; one of the nameless thousands about whom later-day history books speak. But then the great lord makes his peace with the foreign king or is beaten, and you are punished, of course. If you have luck, you escape with your life and can become a brigand again.

In the last year of the seventeenth century the greater part of Hungary was freed of the Turk. The territories they had held were a scene of the utmost desolation. Vast districts were emptied. The great lowlands and famous wheat-growing districts were desolate. Cultivated lands had become tracts of undergrowth, and river districts swamps.

This decayed and devastated Hungary came under the rule of the Habsburgs. We turned against the Habsburgs. They wanted to Germanise the country. They were Catholics, we were Protestants. And what was most important, they were the friends of our lords. Even the famous official historian of Hungary, Acsády, writes that "the nobility in its fear of the serfs made alliance with the Habsburg absolutism against the people"!

"Absolutism" is one of the big words lords use. Now they would

call it "fascism" or "reaction" or "totalitarian dictatorship". Our lords seem to like changing names: to give different names to the same thing. All these big words have a lot in common. They are explained by fine talk about patriotism, the interest of the fatherland, and so on. And the interest of the fatherland seems to be more often than not the interest of the lords. Hungary, for instance, became almost empty at this time. It is true that many hundreds of thousands of us perished between 1514 and 1699. But, after all, under Matthias the Just Hungary had 5,000,000 inhabitants. In 1699 there were about 2,500,000 serfs, tenant serfs and peasants. The explanation is, of course, that those of us who did not belong to some noble simply did not count. They did not even include us in the inhabitants of the country.

We were the scum. Brigands, "*hajducks*" roaming in the forests and mountains of eastern and northern Hungary, the many hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the fighting frontiers who were no longer needed. We were turned out of the castles and garrisons and fortified towns. There was no need for us. Then there were the other property-less people, the Jász and Kuman tribes, good Magyars all of them. And many tens of thousands of small nobles who had lost their land.

As we said, this scum did not count. It was disorderly. It was dangerous. It started and fought in all the *Kuruc* revolts and uprisings. Having no means of living, it furnished the highways with robbers and the numerous big forests with the famous bands of brigands. The vagrants and beggars, the wandering preachers and poets, were also produced by this vast army of homeless—Magyars homeless in their own Magyar land.

The land was there. We thought we should be permitted to work it. We thought that our lords would forget everything we wanted. After all, for 150 years we had all suffered from the Turks. Our country had been bled white. Surely every Magyar would be wanted now—to work in the fields, to produce children, to populate the country?

But "absolutism", "patriotism", the "interest of the country", it seems, lay in another direction. The scum was dangerous. The scum was Hungarian. The scum was the anti-Habsburg *Kuruc*. The Habsburgs did not want a purely Hungarian country. Our lords detested us. So they all agreed on the colonisation of the deserted parts by importing peoples of foreign nationality. On the invitation of the Habsburgs, 80,000 Serbs, under the leadership of their patriarch, Arsenius Tzernoievits, settled in the southern districts, and the "Banat" Germans settled by their tens of thousands in west and south-west Hungary.

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In 1718 the whole of Hungary was liberated from the Turks. The Habsburgs then invited even more people, chiefly Germans, Rumanians and Serbs.

The new guests of the country were good people. They were just as eager to have a home and work on good, rich soil as we were. Nobody can be angry with them for wanting to work and live. But we—homeless in the country where we were born and whose language we spoke—we, the *Kuruc*, the scum, began to hate them, chiefly the Germans, not knowing that not they, but the Habsburgs and our lords, were responsible for this.

For us this colonisation meant that we had lost even any hope of getting land. For our lords it did not mean immediate trouble. As is their custom, they did not think of the future, they did not see that in this way *their* Hungary would become a country of many nationalities. The lord's business is having a country and living well on it. The bigger the country the better he lives. By massacring us, by chasing us out of the country, by chasing us eastwards for 800 years, and then to America before the First Great War (a million and a half of us emigrated there), the lords produced a result which they certainly did not desire—a very small country indeed.

For a time our lords did not see that this process of settlement was a direct arrangement made by the Habsburgs for the weakening of the Hungarian nation.

Those who received estates at the hands of the king were content, while the rest wanted to get estates. The oligarchs, who were used to waging private wars, disliked the idea of a strong, centralised royal power. The big lords, and above all the princes of Transylvania, wanted to be kings themselves. Naturally there were many patriotic nobles who wanted to have a Hungarian king in Hungary.

There were uprisings, revolts and mass movements against Habsburg oppression. Our official history-books call them glorious wars for liberty. Well, in a way they were quite glorious. But, then, they were not only glorious, but also complicated. They had nasty sides also, as most wars have. Those book-loving people who write up history love order above everything else. They like to arrange everything neatly. So if a war or a revolt has a national-war-of-liberty colouring, then they paint only this colour, and skip over everything which complicates it. But if you come to think of it, most wars—like most of life—are not good and beautiful only or ugly and evil only, but both.

After Buda had been taken back from the Turks and the Habsburgs had occupied Transylvania by means of a nasty trick

which is too complicated to narrate here, the Habsburg Emperor called together the national assembly of nobles in 1686. He wanted them to crown his son, Joseph, "eternal king of Hungary". Our lords, who naturally clung to their ancient right to *elect* the king of Hungary, were very upset about this. The Habsburg generals started to persecute those great nobles who objected, and many of them were tortured to death. Our lords grew frightened and gave in. The House of Lords passed a law decreeing that the Habsburgs should be the hereditary rulers of Hungary, and they even left the king's oath to be composed in Vienna. Naturally, when it was a question of how the new king could exploit us, they did not object either. The Habsburgs imposed stiff taxes. The military governors added others, and tortured those of us who could not pay.

By 1697 our lot had become so unbearable that we decided to do something about it. In the mountains and forests of north-eastern Hungary there were whole *Kuruc* districts. For 150 years these had been the frontiers between Transylvanian, Habsburg and Turkish territories. In the mountains and forests, and in the dangerous no man's lands between the three Hungarys, we, the scum, gathered. The brigand *hajducks* had a whole district; there were many thousands of us called *Kuruc* because we hated the lords, the Germans and the Habsburgs, because we were ever ready to fight. We were joined by many thousands of landless nobles, poor priests, students, country teachers and runaway serfs.

We saw that our lot was becoming impossible. The Habsburgs even wanted to force us to speak German. Our lords hated the Habsburgs too; they were in the same boat with us.

We thought hard and we schemed. All over the countryside we had secret meetings. We sent men whom we trusted to visit distant estates and find out how people felt there. In the winter of 1697 the mountains and forests near Sárospatak in north-eastern Hungary became the centre of our conspiracy. All through the winter we made plans. We decided to revolt in the spring, when the German soldiers of the Habsburgs left their well-defended winter garrisons. Young Prince Rákóczi, who owned this part of the country, was our choice of a leader. He was Hungarian. He came from the family which had most right to the Hungarian throne. Our plan was to get him for ourselves. We thought of bringing him to our camp and explaining to him that we wanted to make him king. Then he would have to give us back our old liberties.

In July we started our rising. We sent two of our men to

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young Prince Rákóczi to inform him that we had already taken two castles from the Germans, and that all northern Hungary was in revolt. Would he come and lead us?

He did not. He escaped to Vienna. In his diary Rákóczi wrote:

"In Vienna I visited first of all Archbishop Kolonits. I wanted him to revise his bad opinion of me. . . . On his advice I went to the Emperor and informed him that the mob had taken my estates and asked for help."

Rákóczi was twenty-five years old at that time. He was eager to prove to the Emperor that he had nothing to do with the revolt. He wrote in his diary:

"The Viennese Court now learned about the true state and origin of the rising. It turned out that the uprising had no leader. All this was the work of the disorderly mob. The serfs robbed their own nobles. They arrested and killed those nobles who refused to join them."

For three months we fought. German regiments were sent one after another. The nobles in many countries turned against us. After three months, we were beaten in a pitched battle against five regiments of the Habsburgs, because we were attacked from the rear by a regiment of our lords (the Hungarian regiment led by a certain Paul Deák).

Once more we were punished. The Habsburg armies started looting the countryside. They did not get Rákóczi's treasures, which we had taken at the beginning of the revolt. The Prince himself states:

"The disorderly mob got all my treasures, but they took everything to my Sárospatak castle, partly because they liked me, partly because by this action they wanted to encourage the nobles to join them."

Rákóczi and the other lords saw with growing alarm the way the Habsburg army went on punishing us. Many of us were their serfs, their property. Rákóczi's diary says:

"The soldiers of the Emperor behaved like barbarians in robbing the people. And moreover they committed criminal acts. The wives of those who could not pay were raped. The husbands were forced to suffer this as part payment, and the soldiers committed it (the rape) in their presence. They tortured many to death. Common soldiers tortured the peasants, officers the nobles. In investigating complaints the oath of a

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single German counted for more than the testimony of many Hungarians. . . . It was vain to report all this to the Vienna court; the cost of the investigation had to be paid for by the people."

The Habsburgs distrusted Rákóczi. His enormous estates were devastated. So this rather weak, but after all quite decent, young man became a sincere patriot. Now he was sorry that he had not accepted our offer. He wrote a letter to the French king asking for help in the campaign which he planned against the Habsburgs. His letter was intercepted. He spent five months in prison. Then he escaped to Poland, where he lived for two years in exile, planning, scheming, asking for help from the French and the Poles.

The *Kuruc* movement did not stop after the first defeat. Now we were convinced that Rákóczi was going to help us. He lived near our frontiers. We sent many couriers to him, asking him to come and lead us.

> "Their delegates told me [writes Rákóczi] that the people live in the utmost misery. Their despair forces them to take up arms again. Somehow I must help them. Apart from the garrisons there are very few Habsburg troops in the country. I should offer some help—it will be easy to call the people to arms. The nobility will certainly join now, together with the soldiers of the counties. Men of military age are in danger of being taken to foreign parts in the Habsburg army. They are hiding to avoid this. They will join."

You see, we can plan, we can take action. Our lords say to this very day that we are politically immature; too stupid to have a say in the affairs of the country. We think that this is not true. We knew what to do before the Turks took the countryside; we had our plans against the Habsburgs too, as you have seen.

Rákóczi now joined us. He arrived at the frontier with a handful of soldiers in the summer of 1703. About 500 of us awaited him. Only fifty of us were mounted, 200 had primitive muskets. The rest had scythes and sticks.

This little army, under serf leaders, started on its way. We, the scum, joined by the thousand. Our armies fought under Rákóczi for six years. For six years it was *our* war. Our lords fought against us and Rákóczi. They thought that Rákóczi was more or less forced by us to be our leader. This was not true. He was a decent person. The lessons which the Habsburgs had taught him, the years of exile, had made him a good patriot. But our lords hated us—the *Kuruc*—so much that noble county

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after noble county armed against us. We fought for many years; our uprising became country-wide. The Habsburgs and their armies turned against every Hungarian, *Kuruc* and nobles alike. So our movement became a national one. First the small nobles and then the big lords joined us. They had their grievances against the Habsburgs. They changed our revolution into *their* war of liberty. They fought for the restoration of the "good old times", they wanted to save their ancient feudalism, with its many privileges, for the nobles. Rákóczi did not realise soon enough that his patriotic war of liberty had changed into a national uprising of nobles. And then Rákóczi had been fighting for years. A great part of the country was under him.

So he fought on. The nobility fought because it wanted estates and privileges: we fought because otherwise we would have been starved to death. Then at last the nobles made peace with the Habsburgs against their common enemy: us. Rákóczi fled into exile, and we were punished again. In 1715 our lords, the big ones belonging to the House of Lords, and the small nobles who were members of the House of Commons (common nobles), pledged loyalty to the Habsburgs and branded Rákóczi and us as criminals.

This is the story of "Rákóczi's glorious war of liberty". Official history now praises us—the "*Kuruc* scum"—as the great heroes of national history. But the present-day *Kuruc* are treated in exactly the same way as those of Rákóczi's times.

CHAPTER V

WE OFTEN think about the slaves. The Greeks of olden times were certainly a freedom-loving people. But it never entered their heads that a slave has as much right to happiness as a citizen. It was—and mostly still is—the same with our lords. In the Dark Ages people would have laughed at you if you had said that a serf ought to be just as happy as a knight. Well, it was still the same in Hungary—and perhaps all over the world—in the eighteenth century. Then we were called the "lower orders".

In our peasant newspaper before the First World War we read about an English lady, Miss Hannah More, who in the eighteenth century, after a great famine, addressed the poor women of Shipham in the following words:

"Let me remind you that probably the very scarcity has been permitted by an all-wise and gracious Providence to unite

all ranks of people together, *to show the poor how immediately they are dependent on the rich* . . . to observe the benefits flowing from the distinction of rank and fortune, which has enabled the high so liberally to assist the low. . . . Nor would the gentry have been able to afford such large supplies to the distresses of the poor, had they not denied themselves many indulgences to which their fortune at other times entitles them."

Nowadays in your part of the world nobody would dare to lecture the poor about the right of the upper classes to "many indulgences", or say that famine and starvation are acts of Providence to show the poor the blessings of the social system. And yet this Miss Hannah More was a good and intelligent Christian lady.

Our lords differed in one thing from Miss More. They were mostly foreigners, and if not they spoke Latin instead of Hungarian. Our aristocracy spoke (and mostly still speaks) French and German, and the "common nobles", the "commoners", spoke Latin. Up till 1830 in the schools and colleges in Hungary the Magyar (Hungarian) language was strictly forbidden. Any student who uttered a word of Magyar had to sit in the "dunce's corner".

"An all-wise and gracious Providence" did indeed show us how immediately we were dependent on our lords and on the Habsburgs after our lost war of liberty.

Rákóczi was in exile. His enormous estates were divided among the German lords and those traitors among the nobles who went over to the Habsburg side. Many *Kuruc* nobles were killed or exiled. And then the freshly liberated country was not only devastated by the Turks, it was also depopulated.

The Habsburg Emperor now sold the greater part of Hungary to his faithful generals, pro-Habsburg aristocrats, his army suppliers and his agents, at ridiculous prices. In this way he created a new aristocracy which was completely foreign to the Hungarian nation, the present descendants of which are still the fortunate owners of huge estates. A great number of them Magyarised their names. During Hitler's period of victory many descendants of these aristocrats, nobles and citizens suddenly remembered their German origin and resumed their original German names.

In 1703 the Emperor sold the entire county of Pest to the German Order of Knights for cash. (We, the people, bought it back in 1758.) Count Schoenburn, Bishop of Bamberg, received two Hungarian cities. Many other foreign bishops got estates. Poor pro-Habsburg aristocrats from all over Europe flocked to Vienna to get huge estates for small sums. Some came from Spain, some

from France and Italy, but most of them from Germany and Austria.

We have already told you that the Habsburgs settled many hundreds of thousands of German, Austrian, Serbian and Rumanian land-workers in the empty country, giving them special privileges. This was the situation, then, during the eighteenth century:

Our lords, 5% of the population, owned 85% of the country. Consequently the remaining 95% of the population owned only 15% of Hungary. The number of privileged foreign tenant-settlers (with families) was 3,000,000. We, the Hungarian scum, owned 2% of "our country". May we repeat this fact in this way:

Ninety-nine per cent of the Hungarian people owned two per cent of Hungary.

The world was once again changing around us. Historians will tell you that Hungary became a modern national state at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is true that the age of private wars, of lawlessness among the big lords—in a word, the Middle Ages—came to an end for our lords. (Not for us. Don't forget, please, that in Hungary the "commoners" were the common nobles.) And, even so, the Hungary of the nobles was behind the times because of the Turkish wars.

At this period our lords talked a lot about legality. They became very law-conscious. Up till then every district, every lord, every estate had a separate system. Now, with "modernity", they wanted to make everything "legal", to guard their privileges by means of the "holy laws of Hungary".

Those millions of us "who simply did not count", because we were neither serfs nor estate servants, were suddenly remembered by our lords. A new law in 1729 said that land-workers were not permitted to leave a district while there was work in that district. So not only were the serfs forbidden to move freely about the country, but we, the "free land-workers", also became slaves. But while serfs and estate servants were sure of some sort of a roof over their heads, and some food, we were forced to starve in one district so that labour should be available *if and when the lords in that neighbourhood should want it.* But they were not forced to feed us when they did not need our labour. (The same law and system still exist today.)

The age of legality meant that our lords had many privileges. We had to toil for our lords. We had to pay all the taxes of the country. *The lords were tax-free. They did not pay taxes till 1848.*

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They owned 85% of the country, but they did not contribute a penny to its upkeep. They firmly believed that Providence meant them to be rich and us to be poor. The lords had a monopoly to work the mills, to send their wares to market, to make bricks, to work the ferries, to fish, to sell tobacco and meat. If any of us produced something on our meagre half an acre or the little garden behind our hut:

we paid the lord a toll to take it out of the village;
we paid the lord to ferry it across the river;
we paid the lord for the market-place;
we paid the lord a tenth of the profit.

If we had a quarrel with the lord, we could go to the judge, who was the very same lord and had the right to behead us. There was no appeal against him. And for a life like this we had to pay the State taxes and were required to take up arms for the country.

There were other changes too. Our lords discovered that "the sheep is shorn only by the lord, the serf is shorn also by the king". It was more profitable to have sheep than serfs. This was the age of enclosures in England. The lords all over the world started to destroy agriculture in order to profit more by breeding animals. The same thing happened in Hungary.

But while in the rest of the world there were already cities where the factories could be built, and craftsmen who could work in them, Hungary was still backward. The Habsburgs wanted her to be backward; they wanted their beloved Austria to sell things to Hungary, and our lords hated modernity, which threatened their privileges.

Some of the Hungarian lords wanted to modernise the country. In the middle of the eighteenth century Baron Loerincz Orczy made a great speech against this, saying: "My entire conservatism revolts against the idea that by means of canals, navigable rivers and roads Hungary should be opened to the traffic of the world."

How did *we* live?

Well, we have already told you about our life today. It was very much the same in those times. Work from or before dawn till night. Very little food. During the Turkish wars and Rákóczi's wars hundreds of thousands of men were killed. Our womenfolk continued the work. They became serfs and estate servants instead of their husbands. They married again. We believe in children. And we have our instincts too. In our devastated country, under foreign lords, in the midst of privileged

foreign settlers, we felt somehow that we must produce lots of children in order to save Hungary and the Hungarian language. Learned statisticians will tell you that the birth-rate soared in those days. We started to outnumber the foreigner. The foreign settlers had their property or tenancy. They did not want to divide it. They had two children, and later they had the one-child system. Our women-folk produced ten, twelve, sixteen children. They worked till the last day of their pregnancy. They gave birth in the fields, and many of them returned to work next day, as they do now.

We are a sturdy race. Under-fed and despised, persecuted and massacred, we cling to life like some tough trees which live on hard, stony, storm-swept mountain-sides. It is almost a miracle that we still exist, that we still keep our language, which has—we hasten to inform you—180,000 words. It is almost a miracle that we still want to know everything about the world, that we are still eager for learning, that we still hope that some day we shall rule Hungary—our Hungary.

God is our witness that it was, and still is, difficult. All through the many wars, defeats, historic changes, hostile lords, we kept our language for 800 years—without the help of our lords. In the nineteenth century (for the first time, really) many of our lords came over to our side—at least as far as the language was concerned.

Maria Theresa's son, Emperor Joseph II, was quite a good Habsburg. He restored many of our liberties—above all freedom of movement. Only, as the administration was in the hands of the nobles who ran the counties, these new laws were sabotaged and then repealed. But Germanisation went on. The frontier districts adjoining the Turkish empire were now quiet. For 300 years we had defended them in war. But the Habsburgs decided that Hungarians could not be trusted to guard the frontiers in peace, so they settled foreigners on the very wide frontier belts. Then we had to serve in the Habsburg armies under foreign officers and sergeants. We had to speak German.

Our tempers rose dangerously again. One revolt, immediately after the French Revolution in 1795, was crushed at the start and the leaders beheaded. There were many smaller local revolts. After the Vienna Congress, about which you probably know more than we do, the Vienna Governments of the Habsburgs became the leaders of the reactionary movements in Europe. The lords in most countries were on their side. In Hungary, however, there were some good lords: idealists, decent men,

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patriots, who spoke and wrote Hungarian, who wanted to make our language—the despised language of the scum—into a national language; young counts, barons and common nobles who wanted "reforms". They travelled in France, England and America, and were enthusiastic about a new word, "democracy". And they wanted to help us. They were no longer convinced that we had no right to happiness, to human life.

Such an aristocrat was Count Stephen Széchenyi, whom present-day official history calls "the greatest Hungarian". In his times he was called "red Stefi", and his books were burned in most counties. Another was Louis Kossuth, about whom you have probably read. There was Sándor Petöfi, our great poet, about whom we have still a lot to tell you. And then there was Francis Deák—"the wisest Hungarian" according to official history *now*, "nasty red" according to the nobles of twenty-six counties where his books were burnt *then*.

Count Széchenyi and his friends wanted to liberate the serfs. The Count wrote early in the nineteenth century:

> "We speak without shame about the Miserable Plebs for all Europe to hear—in the nineteenth century, when man's dignity is beginning to be considered holy. Foreign countries tolerate this situation thanks to our being unknown to them, and therefore they probably think that it is a question of a small sect oppressed for its religion—while it is a matter of nine million faithful (and how faithful!) serfs and soldiers (and what soldiers)!, *i.e.* patient bearers of all burdens, the last hope and guardians of the Hungarian nation."

The English poet Goldsmith expressed the same sentiment, speaking about England in his "Deserted Village":

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
> Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

The "peasantry"—that is we, the people—was still bold. We started a bloody revolution again in 1831. We don't want to tell you the usual story. It was crushed. The Vienna of the famous Metternich helped our lords to crush it.

This Metternich was a foxy person indeed. He played the common nobles against the big lords; he used us to threaten both of them. The nobles still did not pay taxes. And there were many nobles in Hungary. In Austria there was one noble to every 300

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inhabitants, in Austrian Poland (Galicia) one noble to every sixty-eight inhabitants, in Hungary every twentieth man was a noble. The great numbers of common nobles were chiefly Hungarians. They were the lawyers, they belonged to the civil service, which was organised into county administrations. The counties were called "noble counties". You had to address the county in the same way as you spoke to a lord. Not only was the nation not ours; it would have been just as impudent for us to say that the county in which we lived was ours. They were *noble* counties.

Well, the common nobles were terrified that they would be forced to pay taxes. So Metternich always got his way simply by threatening equal taxation. The Hungarian Press was directed at this time from the Vienna of Metternich, as it was a hundred years later from the Berlin of Hitler. The descendants of those same foreign lords who sold the country to Vienna sold it to Berlin after the lapse of a century.

All the deputies of the House of Commons (common nobles) who dared to proclaim that the nobility should pay the same taxes as the people, and that the serfs ought to be liberated, were recalled or abused by the counties. And even most of these deputies, when they demanded "democracy", wanted a democracy of the nobles by the nobles for the nobles. Their democrat feelings were chiefly directed against the aristocrats as opposed to the common nobles.

What did *we* want?

We wanted land; the right to move about freely. We did not want to serve in the army of the Habsburgs. We wanted to talk our own language.

And we had leaders. A few young writers, mainly of peasant origin, gathered at this time in the coffee-houses of Budapest. Their leader was the poet Sándor Petőfi. He died on the battlefield in 1849, at the age of twenty-six. But what a life he had behind him! He wrote thousands of the most beautiful poems in our language. He learnt German, French and English, and translated a lot of Shakespeare. He helped, organised and led our revolution, showing so much foresight and wise statesmanship that we admire him to this very day. He was a genius. And he was one of us.

We wanted to be free.

We wanted to revolt with all the subject peoples of the Habsburgs and form a federated republic in place of the Habsburg empire.

All over Europe thrones were in danger. All over Europe there were revolts. In Germany, in Italy, in France.

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Our lords were worried—aristocrats and common nobles alike. Such traitors as the Counts Széchenyi, Teleki, Batthyanyi, the Barons Eötvös and Kemény, and nobles like Louis Kossuth and many others, all spoke in varying degrees about equal taxation and the liberation of the serfs. The Vienna of Metternich was naturally for equal taxation, which meant more taxation if it could be attained without leftish disturbances.

The nobles of both Houses also realised that something must be done. While the "absolutism" of Vienna wanted to solve the question from above, our lords wanted to "liberate" us, starting from below, in such a way that their leading position would be safeguarded by laws. Only nobles had a right to vote in the country. The great majority of nobles of this enlightened "reform" age did not want to give us the right to vote. By liberating the serf they meant that we should no longer "belong" to our lords, but that they must receive indemnity for their loss of property. There were long squabbles as to who should pay the indemnity and how much. The majority of the nobles agreed that we must pay the indemnity for our liberation. Nobody wanted to give us land.

As you see, they were prepared to permit their slaves to buy their freedom, and they looked upon this as a great act of humanity and democracy. But they could not decide even on this for more than ten years, and we had already carried out our revolution, led by the young writers of Budapest, before they offered a tiny part of the rights which we had already won.

Yes, for a short time we were victorious. For a short time we, the people, led by Petöfi the poet and other writers, won power, won the support of our Rumanian and Serbian serf-brethren. We thought that our federated people's republic, in place of the Habsburg empire, would soon be achieved, and that then all of us—Serbs, Rumanians, Hungarians, Slovaks—would be equally free and happy.

But our revolution was stolen from us by our lords, and was transformed into the national war of liberty of the nobles, easily crushed by the Habsburgs and the armies of the Czar.

The story of our 1848 is full of lessons. Perhaps you will not mind if we tell this story in some detail.

Well, it is March 14th 1848. The "Youth of March" is in session. The great twenty-five-year-old poet, loved by the people and the students, hated by Metternich and the great lords, is discussing the twelve-point demand formulated by the Hungarian people. Those twelve points aimed at freeing and enfranchising the people, demanded an independent and responsible

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Hungarian Government, the abolition of censorship, equal taxation, the liberation of the serfs, the freeing of political prisoners, complete equality before the law, the system of jury, the promise that Hungarian soldiers should not serve abroad or foreign soldiers serve in Hungary.

(Curiously enough, these were our demands in 1940–42 too. Nothing had changed except the names. Hitler for Metternich. Totalitarianism for Absolutism. And of course the names of the political prisoners.)

The Youth of March—their average age was twenty-five—decided to hold a mass-meeting the next day and, if the people of Pest (later Budapest) accepted the points, to send delegates to the nobles of both Houses asking them to accept this programme. *Petöfi wrote a poem then which really made history.* In a way that makes your blood boil and fills you with enthusiasm and excitement, he told the Hungarian people in this poem the same thing that Dózsa told them in 1514.

"Now is the time—now or never. . . . Shall we be slaves or free men? . . . This is the question, take your choice. . . ."

This was the gist of this great poem, which is untranslatable.

On March 15th 1848, Petöfi and the young men of March went with a great following to the biggest printing press in the capital. They had the twelve points and Petöfi's revolutionary poem printed without the permission of the Habsburg censorship. These two leaflets were being printed the whole day. Everyone in the capital had them; next day the whole country had them.

There was a mass meeting. The twelve points were read, and then Petöfi declaimed his revolutionary poem. The people of the capital accepted the twelve points. Petöfi and the young men of March went to the Lord Mayor and the Municipal Council of the capital with the request that they should sign the demands. The delegates of the people were permitted to enter without delay into the great hall where the council was in session. The good councillors started to argue whether to sign the twelve points or not. One of the young men grew impatient. He jumped on to the council table and shouted at the council: "We have no time, gentlemen. Please sign at once, the people are waiting."

So they signed. Then we, the people, lead by Petöfi, went over to the Habsburg governor's office and requested him:

(1) to abolish the censorship at once;
(2) to order the Habsburg army to permit the formation of a purely Hungarian national guard in the capital;
(3) to set the political prisoners free.

The Habsburg governor, seeing the great multitude, signed the order at once.

So, for the first time in our history, our revolution was victorious in the capital within a few hours, without a drop of blood having been shed!

Many other cities joined the revolt. The delegates in the capital were very coldly received by the members of the House of Lords and House of Nobles. These good lords were bargaining with the Habsburg Emperor, in the hope that he would grant *their* Hungary a separate and independent government with separate Ministries of War, Finance and Foreign Affairs.

At last, on March 18th 1848, they passed a law proclaiming the *principle* of equal taxation and the abolition of feudalism and noble privileges.

Next day the Habsburg Archduke Stephen sent the following wire to his Emperor:

> "Yesterday, under the influence of panic, both Houses voted for the abolition of feudal privileges."

The Minister of Justice of the new government (Francis Deák, himself a noble) said in a speech: "The legislative bodies very rightly thought that in such times any delay might be dangerous. The legislative body and the government should either suppress the movement or win its leadership. The two Houses did not feel strong enough to suppress it—they were, indeed, very wise to decide to lead it, thus avoiding civil war."

One of the deputies, Menyhért Lónyai, wrote: "We were under the influence of panic caused by news of the popularity of the movement and by Petõfi's fierce poem."

Our lords, in speaking about this period, always stress their magnanimity in voluntarily giving up their privileges. The truth in that they have not given them up even to this very day: they only voted for a mere *principle* because they were terrified of us. They never meant to liberate us.

But our revolt was very successfully used by our lords to get concessions from the Habsburgs. We wanted to make a federated people's republic; they wanted a dual monarchy with separate and independent ministries. They were eager to have their own state. Emperor Ferdinand I consented to the separate ministries on condition that Foreign Affairs should be controlled by the Vienna Government, and that, so far as the Ministry of War was concerned, the appointment of officers and the direction of the army should be in His Majesty's (*i.e.*, the Vienna Government's) hands.

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Our lords consented, and the first "independent and responsible Hungarian Cabinet" was formed. Count Batthyanyi became Premier, and Louis Kossuth, leader of the common nobles, Minister of Finance.

This independent government was very weak indeed. It had no power because it had no army. Moreover, the very wide frontier districts of Hungary remained under the control of Vienna. While *in principle* the Habsburgs made concession to our lords, in the most important frontier districts of Hungary they prepared war against the Hungarians. The members of the new government and their followers were all lords.

Then everything got mixed up. Petõfi, Táncsics and the rest of the revolutionary leaders knew that we, the people, were not strong enough, not organised well enough, to start to fight the Habsburg armies. Petõfi did everything to hold us back from a fresh revolt against the new government and the Habsburgs. The government looked upon itself as a revolutionary government. In reality the nationalist government of nobles only wanted "democracy" for the nobles. This "revolutionary democratic" government consisted of one prince and three counts; the rest were nobles.

CHAPTER VI

ANDRAS, ONE of the lads in our *puszta*, became a technician. He visited distant places. Once he went to northern Germany, and he told us how he was haunted by the smell and taste of fish. If one had goose, it smelt of fish, because they fed the geese with cheap fish. The pork was the same. The coffee also smelt of fish because the big docks where they kept their coffee were next to the fish warehouse. Poor András got to such a pitch that when he kissed a German lass he thought her lips smelt of fish too.

Well, it is the same in the country of our lords. Everything smells of lords. We revolt, and what is the result? A government of one prince, three counts and eleven nobles!

Was this a bad thing?

Yes, it was. The lords are short-sighted and very egotistical. They are used to thinking about *their* country, *their* people and *their* nation.

We and our leaders are used to looking a situation in the face. We are not hypnotised by the belief that God somehow wants us to boss other people.

Well, we had our plans. Petõfi and the other "youngsters", "dreamers" and "utopians" thought that the Rumanian, Serbian and Slovak serfs wanted the same things as we wanted: to speak their own language; to have a piece of land; to be free from the tyranny of the lords.

We offered them this, and we asked them to co-operate to this end.

They accepted the offer, and they were willing to co-operate against the common enemies—*i.e.*, the henchmen of the Habsburgs and the Austrian troops.

We were not strong enough. The lords took over the leadership of the revolution. For tactical reasons, as you have seen, they were willing to give up certain of their privileges in *principle*, but they were quite unable to give up their violent racial pride, and so they started to preach the gospel that only Hungarians should be freed of the Habsburg yoke.

The revolution of 1848 was turned into the national war of liberty of 1849.

The revolution of 1848 declared the serfs free. The gentlemen of the war of liberty of 1849 started to use Habsburg soldiers against the serfs who refused to continue to do forced labour. This happened all over Hungary. Naturally it was very easy for the clever agents of the Habsburgs to tell the Rumanian and Serbian serfs that the Hungarians did not want to free them. Actually, in Transylvania the Rumanian nobles were just as eager to keep their land and their serfs as the Hungarians.

There was a Slovak noble, Francis Pulszky, who had the same attitude to the Slovak language as our nobles had to our language. Both thought and spoke about the language of the serfs. This Slovak noble, Pulszky, proved that he was first a noble and only afterwards a Slovak. In 1848 he announced that the Slovaks were not ready to be governed in their own language.

Kossuth saw this, but he was powerless to do anything about it. The Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian rebel armies, Goergey, said: "The blind conceit of the few turned the Slav and Rumanian masses against the Hungarians."

So this was one bit of harm the "fish" did.

Then there was another aspect. There was a revolution against the Habsburgs in Italy also. We were all jubilant. We already saw the reactionary Habsburg strength collapsing everywhere, and we thought that the big Central and Eastern European federation might also include the Italians who had just been freed of the Habsburg yoke.

But our lords, our "revolutionary" government of princes and

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ounts, was bargaining with the Habsburgs. *And when the Habsurgs asked for Hungarian regiments to help crush the Italian revolt our evolutionary government gave that help.*

We were all furious. We, the "dreamers", we, the stupid, unnformed scum, knew full well that we could be victorious only f we fought against the Habsburgs with all our brethren.

We knew that, even from the standpoint of our lords, who beieved in bargaining with the Habsburgs (as they later believed n bargaining with Hitler), it was stupid—nay, suicidal—to give rmed help against another subject people of the Habsburgs.

Do you see why we say that our lords were short-sighted? We new, and told them so, that the minute the Italian revolt, the talian war of liberty, was crushed, the entire Habsburg power vould turn against us.

Petöfi wrote letters, articles and poems to this effect. Táncsics nd the other people's leaders shouted at the top of their voices gainst this folly. The noble counts and princes smiled. They vere the people, they said quietly, who understood politics. They vere the people who were familiar with diplomacy.

And we even lost the chance to say "we told you so", because ur revolution of 1848 and their war of liberty of 1849 were rushed and twenty years of terror started, similar to the Gestapo egimes of our present age.

The Vienna government, the Habsburgs, behaved very "cleverly"—if lying, stabbing in the back, breaking solemn oaths, nd general treachery can be called clever. Through their agents hey turned the various nationalities against the Hungarians, the ords against the serfs. At the start the Habsburgs came out penly for the liberation of the serfs. Later a new royal decree nnounced that the discontinuation of the forced labour system aused economic disaster, so that it ought to be reconsidered. Naturally our lords, who were already frightened of us, thought hat after all it was better to keep their estates and serfs than to ave the questionable privilege of being free in a country where he serfs were also free.

The blind conceit of our lords, the work of the Habsburg gents, and the stupidity of Rumanian lords turned the Rumanans definitely against the Hungarian revolution on May 15th 848. The Rumanian Grand Assembly in Balásfalva solemnly eclared "that the Rumanian people want to be loyal to the Habsburg Kaiser for ever".

On the same day the Transylvanian Saxons turned against the Hungarians, and again on the same day the misguided Serbians nvaded Hungary at Zimony with fifty guns and several regiments.

175 The Croats also attacked. They too believed the Habsburgs
566 when they said that, if the Croats helped them against the Hungarians, they would get their freedom as their reward.

Thus you had Hungarian lords sending troops against the Italians, hoping for a reward from the Habsburgs, Croatian lords sending troops against the Hungarians, hoping for a reward from the Habsburgs, and so on.

You would think that even a child would see through all this. Well, our lords did not. And if you come to think of it, similar things have happened not only in Central Europe, and not only in the last century. We know of lords who believed gangsters because they wanted to believe them, because by believing these gangsters they thought they were serving only their own interests. And they did not serve even that!

What is there to tell you about this period? Oh, yes. The Habsburg Emperor, Ferdinand, made too many promises, swore too many oaths. Even the Habsburg family council thought that it was impossible to break so many. So the old Kaiser abdicated and they brought in the youngster Francis Joseph, who was not bound by oaths and promises.

What did *we* do?

We fought, were killed on the battlefields, executed by the Habsburgs.

We fought in our revolution and in the war of liberty of our lords. We fought and were killed by the hundred thousand. We fought well! We are told that even the English thought we were brave. There were lots of Englishmen on our side in England. They wrote leading articles and marvellous poems praising us. Then the new Kaiser thought that we were too brave. The Habsburg armies could not crush us. So the Kaiser sent a clever man to the Russian Czar, telling him that if the Hungarians won over the Habsburgs, maybe the Poles would start to fight against him. This frightened the Czar, and he declared that it was in the national interest of the Russians to crush the Hungarian war of liberty. Huge Russian armies attacked us from the east and crushed us. Hungarian serfs and Russian *mujiks* killed each other by the thousand, and then our revolution of 1848 and the war of liberty of 1849 were finally crushed.

So we were punished again. A régime of terror started all over Hungary. The Habsburgs sent their chief henchman, Baron Bach, to Hungary. Thousands of police spies, agents, policemen. Hungarian civil servants became Austrianised. The Hungarian army was officered by Austrians. The estates confiscated from

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oel Hungarian lords were given to Austrian aristocrats. Kossuth s exiled. Thirteen of our generals were hanged. More than ten ousand of us were executed. The Austrian prisons, chiefly that Kufstein, were full of Hungarians. Petöfi died fighting against e Czarist armies. Count Széchenyi, one of the good lords, went ane and died. Our newspapers were stopped. Our schools re controlled by the Habsburgs.

In July 1849, two hundred thousand Russians invaded Hungary. ssuth asked for help from "free Europe". He did not get it. The Czarist and Habsburg armies ravaged Hungary. They nted to find the Crown of Hungary. They could not find it. had been well hidden. This Crown, which was nearly a ousand years old at that time, was made of gold and jewels worth mall fortune. But simple people hid it. It was buried here, it s buried there. The blood-soaked soil of Hungary successfully l the Crown which the Habsburgs needed formally to become ngs of Hungary.

While Kossuth went to England and America to get help for ngary, the country was again under a foreign yoke. A contem-rary writes (1850):

"Buda-Pest is a dead city. The Austrian victors can be seen everywhere. Hungarians do not enter a shop if an Austrian officer or civil servant is there. In the coffee-houses the agents of Baron Bach are watching. People do not talk. For a while hey tried to whisper to each other in the coffee-houses, but hey gave it up because the Habsburg police arrest everyone who whispers. One gets up every morning with an awful feel-ng, knowing full well that one will hear terrible news, streams f it. News of fresh executions, fresh orders. One never knows when the police will knock. Whenever the bell rings the family exchange glances and wonder if they are seeing each other for he last time. The dangers and uncertainty of the future and he terrors of the present lie heavy on everybody. Buda-Pest, he gay and lively city, has become a prison-city sentenced o death. The Hungarians have disappeared, Buda-Pest has ecome a German city."

The Habsburg censors started their work, which they carried on until 8. Newspapers were suspended for the least offence. The intel-tual leader of the country, the *Pesti Napló*, was suspended at the uest of the Russian Czar. Poets went to prison for their poems ors for caricaturing the Austro-German oppressors, teacher teaching Hungarian.

We were given new masters: Austrian lords instead of Hun-

garians. We had to serve in the Austrian army and speak German. German sergeants whipped and kicked us.

In 1849 the Habsburgs started a new Germanisation of Hungary. The "Gestapo" of Baron Bach sat in the ministries, in the civil service, in the army. They had children who grew up in Hungary. They grew rich in Hungary.

Our lords did not like this. They saw that the number of Hungarians was decreasing. They were worried about the future of their nation. And naturally, they wanted jobs. They wanted to be important. So they made the famous "Ausgleich", the compromise, the deal with the Habsburg House giving the Hungarian nation of our lords semi-independence and a pretence of national sovereignty.

This was in 1867. The Habsburg Empire became Austro-Hungary, consisting now of two "ruling people", the Austrians and the Magyars, two "second-class" people, the Croats and the Poles, and six peoples without rights: the Czechs, Slovaks, Rumanians, Ruthenes, Slovenes and Serbs. In reality, of course, a handful of ambitious politicians made this deal with the Habsburgs in order to have a place in the régime, to be important.

Kossuth, still living in exile, was against this compromise with the Habsburgs. He saw clearly that some day the subject people would revolt and become free. And in that case those Hungarians who had fought for two years against the Habsburgs in 1848–49 would be looked upon as the accomplices of the Habsburgs. Kossuth predicted some seventy years ago *that Austria would one day belong to Germany, and that then all the Austro-Germanisation of the Habsburgs would make the German penetration to the east much easier.*

In that period, truly enough, the Austrian tyranny allied itself with the Prussian tyranny. Bismarck united the Germans under the tyranny of the Prussian Kaisers, and he backed the Germanisation carried out in Hungary by the Habsburgs, well knowing that in the end the German Reich would reap the results. The two big Powers, Prussia and Austria, worked against Kossuth, who would not have been defeated if our lords in Hungary had listened to us. We were still loyal to the idea of 1848, we still sang songs about Kossuth and liberty.

The Austrian army officers and civil servants grew worried at the compromise. They were in great danger of losing their jobs. Since they had by this time lived for nearly twenty years in Hungary, had estates there and spoke some Hungarian, they started to change their names. They took Hungarian names. So they kept their jobs. Naturally these new Hungarians, these tens

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of thousands of Habsburg officers, civil servants, police agents and what not, had to make a very loud noise to prove that they were Hungarians. They preached chauvinism.

There is a saying about people who are more Popish than the Pope. Well, these people, who had previously formed a kind of Bach-Gestapo, became more Hungarian than the Hungarians. They constantly preached against the Rumanians and the Serbs. And in Hitler's brief victory period they and their descendants discovered their German origin and changed back to their original German names. Have you thought about punishing these skunks?

CHAPTER VII

OUR LORDS accepted the *principle* of our liberation in 1848. We have not told you what happened to this great "liberation". Well, the answer is—not much.

We don't want to bore you with technicalities and little details. It is enough to say that in the country of our lords there were twenty million acres of great feudal estates. These estates were not worked by "serfs", but by "estate servants". So some of the "serfs" who could pay indemnity, and who overcame the hundreds of legal obstacles, acquired land and really became free peasants, but their number was small. The rest—that is, we—continued to be serfs in reality, but officially we were called "estate servants".

The great majority of the agricultural population had not felt the blessings of the "reforms" of 1848. Our lords naturally did not want to see the big feudal and Catholic estates given to the land-workers, all the more as the first agrarian reform was, strictly speaking, due at this time in Hungary.

We felt this. We have some historic instinct, and we felt that an injustice had been inflicted on us which would affect our whole life and future existence. As early as 1848 we started to distribute the common pastures and confiscate the big estates. We made, so to speak, a revolution within the revolution of 1848. The land-workers' revolution spread with particular rapidity in Békés county, where the revolutionary government proclaimed martial law. One after another our leaders were court-martialled and sentenced to death. At Orosháza, István Oláh, at Mezœberény, Adam Frey, were hanged as a warning that the big promise of liberty, fraternity and equality did not apply to everybody.

1975 X 566 X One of Hungary's troubles is that she did not go through the development which the French Revolution brought. Like Spain and Poland, in the country of our lords feudalism was revived in the second part of the last century, when the masses lay prostrate.

The entailed estates of the aristocrats are, after all, the best symptom of feudalism. These huge estates cannot be sold, cannot be divided. The system of entailed property has one aim: to preserve big estates.

The majority of the entailed estates belonging to the Hungarian aristocracy were actually founded from 1869 onwards, that is, at a time when in most other countries the last traces of agrarian feudalism were disappearing.

Do you know what an entailed estate is? It is an estate which according to law cannot be sold. It is in the interest of the country—says the law—that, for instance, the Esterhazy family should always have one hundred thousand acres which will belong to the eldest son for ever. As we said, the majority of such estates were created from 1869 onwards. *The law still defends these entailed estates today.*

The comparatively few free peasants created by the very stingy 1849 "serf-liberation" multiplied. Their meagre property was split, and starvation visited the over-populated villages. Our lords, the Habsburg government, by creating the huge entailed estates, destroyed even those small holdings which were so dearly won from them in 1849.

In 1896 Sándor Csizmadia, a twenty-five-year-old land-worker, who became one of the first agrarian socialist organisers in Hungary, was accused of stirring up revolt. In his speech of defence he said:

"I want to state now that I do not want to defend myself—I just want to explain why I wrote the article which, according to the State attorney, incited feeling against one class. If we, poor people of the soil, under the influence of our hunger and misery, write a very meek article, the State attorney should not at once begin to worry about the State. And if the State is endangered by the article, then those people should be accused who create a situation which revolts every decent human being. The State attorney places me in the dock because I am revolted by revolting things. He is accusing me for having eyes and a heart. The State attorney said that workers will get rights if they are ripe for them. Is it not curious that, at the very moment when the workers are excluded from all kinds of rights because they are not supposed to be ripe for full citizenship, a member of the most ignorant and immature group of the working class, a land-

worker, is put in the dock and accused of endangering the peace of society, of wanting to arouse class-hatred, of wanting to overthrow a well-ordered society? And all this he is supposed to be able to accomplish with his ignorant and immature peasant's pen.

"But let us look at these dangerous people who so heartlessly want to set men against men. I should like the State attorney to come with me in the spring and hoe for sixteen hours for a wage of 50 *krajcárs* [about 6*d.*], to eat a piece of dry bread and rotten bacon, and then have his six hours' sleep in a hole in the fields which he has made for himself with his own hoe. Then in the summer he ought to work for twenty to twenty-two hours a day on the same food, and work just as long in the autumn, harvesting maize. If he would try all this and then read that article, he would find it very meek indeed. There is a great deal of proof. On the *pusztas* and ranches fathers of families work for 15 *krajcárs* [less than 2*d.*] from three in the morning till ten at night. Yes, anyone doubting my words should come with me. I'll show him everything.

"I have seen the family life of estate servants. Three or four families living in a one-room hut, many a time twenty to twenty-five people living in one room. . . . I have seen men collapsing on the street from starvation, and I have seen men drowned in their own fat, so to speak. Such things are not exactly calculated to make one enthusiastic about the fatherland.

"And anyway, what does my article say? Do our good lords think that we shall starve to death without a word? Well, honourable jury, I am quite sure that the State attorney does not want to starve to death—there is nobody in the country who would like to do that. But we cannot bear in silence all the merciless inhumanity which the State power and the rich classes inflict on us. Nobody can expect us to praise them for it.

"When I speak of the fatherland, honourable jurors, I do not mean a piece of land, because in that case I should really have *no* fatherland. No matter where I went, if I set foot on any piece of earth, saying 'This is mine', I should be chased away with the words, 'Get off there, that is not yours!' Therefore when I speak of the fatherland, I mean the existing system, and I think I may hate this system, may I not? I am a Magyar, for I was born here. I don't deny that, and I will teach my children to be Magyar. I served in the Army too, and if the time comes I shall be prepared to defend the fatherland. And the fatherland, in recognition of my service, does not give me even the right to vote.

"Hunger and misery made me an agrarian socialist. I became

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a socialist because I saw how those in power persecute the socialists. I became a socialist because I saw that those adhering to socialist principles not only talk about liberty, equality and fraternity but are also prepared to suffer for those principles.

"I am not afraid of prison. I will gladly go where so many good people have already suffered and are still suffering. We socialists have a treasured relic: the list of the imprisoned. Why should not I, as an agrarian socialist, add to this treasure by one name? I will go proudly to prison, for I shall be the first land-worker who has earned a prison sentence by his pen. This will be the best proof that the land-workers are not as ignorant as people say."

He was sentenced to three months. Others got more. Official Hungary celebrated in the same year, 1896, the thousand-year-old existence of the Hungarian kingdom. The man who wanted human conditions for ten million Hungarian land-workers celebrated this great occasion in prison.

But putting him into prison did not persuade us that starvation is a good thing. When in 1897 we wanted to make our new contracts for harvesting, wages were again lowered. We started to strike. The great Hungarian plain, the heart of wheatland, became a battlefield.

We, the strikers, held meetings and waited for new offers from our lords. Instead, the gendarmerie arrived and charged our meetings with bayonets. Nádudvar, Zenta, Toponár, Alpár, Elemér and a lot of other villages witnessed the brave fights of Hungarian gendarmes against unarmed Hungarian land-workers. In some villages they used only their bayonets, in others they fired. Many of us died, many went to prison.

But gendarmes were not enough to make us work for starvation wages. So the government decided to use the old method of importing foreigners. They built workers' camps on the huge estates and *put into them sixty thousand Rumanian, Serbian and Slovak land-workers.* These foreigners were actually paid the wages we were asking for.

Do *you* understand our lords? We don't.

Then in 1898 the Parliament of our lords brought in a law which made it illegal for land-workers to strike, on the grounds that important national interests called for the undisturbed progress of harvesting. Naturally *our* living conditions did not represent the national interest. Naturally the fact that at this time six out of every ten of our babies did not live for more than a year did not worry the "nation" of our lords. Naturally we started to call

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tuberculosis "Hungarian disease" because so many of us had it, thanks to starvation. Naturally this was no danger to the nation either.

This new law took away our only effective defence against the covetousness of our lords: striking. And this law was opposed by only one single member of the House of Commons. When he cast his vote, the whole House roared with laughter. Really, the Parliament of our lords has never been so strongly united as on that occasion.

The "free" land-workers were beaten. Now we, the estate servants, were attacked by our lords. Our wages were cut, and cut again. By 1905 they were so low that even we had to revolt. We were not afraid of the gendarmes and of prison. When your hungry children are constantly wailing that they can't stand being hungry any longer, when your wife is always fainting because she is so feeble and starved, when you yourself are drunk with hunger—well, then you just don't give a damn.

We started our strike in 1905. More than ten thousand estate servants all over the country stopped work simultaneously. The government mobilised ten thousand foreigners against us. More than a thousand of us were arrested. Sixty of us were shot by the gendarmes. Still we did not stop striking. And we won. Our legal demands were met. We got back our old wages. You know, about 2*d.* a day.

Of course 2*d.* a day does not seem to you worth fighting and dying for. But if 2*d.* a day stands between you and death—well, then you just fight for it and are glad to get it.

Our victory gave fresh courage to the land-workers. In 1906 more than a hundred thousand of us, free land-workers, went on strike. The usual things followed: bayonet charges, firing on the masses, five thousand arrests. Meanwhile Rumanian workers, the army and the prison convicts did the harvesting.

By this time we already had a growing agrarian socialist movement organised by the Agricultural Labour Association. We wanted collective harvesters' contracts and collective bargaining. The Estate Owners' Association (OMGE in Hungarian), on the other hand, demanded martial law from the government against such an outrage.

They succeeded. The strikers were called up for military service and had to harvest for nothing in uniform.

This was not enough for the Estate Owners' Association. They had a meeting, at which they decided to import less ambitious land-workers from Russia, Poland and Rumania.

Amidst general applause, one of the land-owners proposed that a hundred

X175 X566 *thousand coolies from China should be imported, on the grounds that the economic life of a modern state cannot do without coolies.* After a three hours' discussion this proposal was rejected, for though coolies would do excellently, travelling expenses would be too high, and it would take more than ten years to pay off the debt. . . .

This was the pre-1914 "liberal" period in the country of our lords. Bankers, manufacturers, big landowners, were all permitted to unite and to form organisations; even the industrial workers could build up their Trade Unions; but all attempts by us to do the same thing were met by prison and the gendarme's bayonet. Is it strange that we did not feel we belonged to the Hungarian nation? After all, this nation constantly defended herself against us by importing Rumanians, Poles and Serbs. We—the people—were the enemies of the nation.

At this time we had a leader, András Achim, who in 1904 even became an M.P. *He was killed in 1911 and the murderers were acquitted because they belonged to the ruling class.*

During his brief political career Achim did a lot for us. He organised a movement of land-workers, edited his peasant newspaper, and led us in the spirit of Dózsa.

In 1906 he had to defend himself against the charge that his articles were inciting people against the *status quo*. Read part of his speech:

"A society which entirely excludes the millions of workers from the benefit of their rights and share in the national income is immoral and no honest man can be expected to feel any respect for it.

"The existing order of law is designed for birth, privilege and wealth. . . . Owing to the bad institutions, the greatest political and economic power is often exercised by the most unsuitable people, while the most competent brains are being wasted in the foul air of workshops or in small positions in offices of different kinds, at a slave's salary.

"The future order for which I am fighting, and for which I am accused of stirring up the people, will be one in which only the work done by the individual, the importance of that work, and its real value will assign to the citizen his importance in society.

"I admit that a more educated man would go about it in a more subtle way; but the geese of the Capitol could not sing like nightingales either, and yet they saved Rome, because the Romans did not mind about the voice, but listened to the warning.

"A political hunt is being instigated against me by the present

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ruling classes to prevent me—the simple leader of the people—from speaking of the sufferings of the people, the misery of the people, the sinful negligence of the privileged classes, the real cause of emigration.

"Under the present legal system the people are being blackmailed for the benefit or privileges of the higher classes; for an acre of ground a peasant has to pay eight to ten crowns tax, while the aristocrat, for his giant estate, pays barely one crown per acre.

"I state the following: a craftsman who applies for a licence to work has to pay 28 crowns for it, a tradesman with one or two assistants 90–100 crowns, but a rich manufacturer can arrange for immunity from taxation and get 30,000–40,000 crowns yearly assistance from the State.

". . . emigration has been arranged by village officials, and the police notaries collect 10–80 crowns instead of 1 crown from emigrants."

In 1906 Achim published in his peasant newspaper the programme of his Independent Socialist Peasant Party. The programme rejected with disgust the eternal constitutional struggle with the Habsburgs. It stated that the feudal spirit was still alive in Hungary. It demanded a general secret ballot for everyone. Its demands concerning the regulation of land property were very moderate indeed. *It asked only for the expropriation of estates over 10,000 acres,* and requested that they should be transformed into small holdings. The rest of the demands were: progressive taxation, freedom of speech and of the press, reform of public administration and new legislation for agricultural work. Most of these demands had been realized decades or even centuries earlier in most countries of the world. In Hungary they were very dangerous. Because of them Achim had to be murdered.

Some people say that we are biased. Our answer is, first, that of Csizmadia: show us someone who *likes* to starve. And secondly, we have lots of documentary evidence about this period.

In 1894 the landowners' association, for instance, the famous OMGE, which in reality rules Hungary, sent its secretary, Gyula Rubinek, to investigate the condition of the land-workers in the great plain. Here is part of his report:

"The population of the great plain consists of civil servants, rich peasants and the agrarian proletariat, who all live isolated from each other, hating each other.

"The civil service regards the Hungarian agricultural districts as colonies, and their own jobs as colonial service.

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"The rich peasants are somehow lodged in an unassailable and sterile conservatism, while the land-workers remember the big historic revolutions and regard the future without hope. Nevertheless, their revolutionary ambitions are still alive."

Yes, we are biased. We even have the cheek to say that our lords, constantly prattling about their grand patriotism, were traitors to Hungary. *Between 1890 and 1914 they chased nearly 1,500,000 Hungarians to the United States of America and various South American republics.*

One of the Prime Ministers of this period, Baron Fehérvary, was attacked by someone for permitting and even helping emigration. He shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Some are emigrating and some are immigrating: the two balance, so everything is all right."

The result was minority problems, Jewish problems (more than two hundred thousand Jews immigrated to Hungary from Galicia in this period) and industrial problems. The growing Hungarian industry had not enough workers, for they were recruited from the ranks of the unemployed land-workers. The Hungarian Chamber of Industry was worried because the factories were without a big reserve of cheap labour. At that period the Chamber of Industry presented a memorandum to the Government stating that "the biggest and perhaps the gravest problem of our industrial life is emigration and the lack of workers caused thereby. It is a sad fact that the population of our country has been decreasing alarmingly for the last two years. . . . Because of such huge emigration not only are we unable to develop our industry, but even the existing factories will have to close down."

But the Hungarian government, the government of big estate owners, were worried chiefly by the great number of land-workers. They were afraid that they would have to give up part of their land to those who worked it. So the Government made a contract with the Cunard Line to transport us to the U.S.A. They soon had to make a new contract with some German companies, because the Cunard Line could only transport fifty thousand Hungarians a year, and there were years when two hundred and ten thousand Hungarians had to leave their Fatherland, where they could not get a piece of land.

The emigration, backed by the government, was a great blow to our land-workers' movements. The government agents promised us plenty of work, and even land—on the other side, in the promised land.

So we went.

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Our lords chased us out of Transylvania, northern Hungary and south-western Hungary by the hundreds of thousands. After the First World War even greater pieces of Hungary were taken away from them, on the excuse that there was a mixed population. The Trianon Peace Treaty was no doubt unjust. Everybody knows that. Four million Hungarians were forced to live under foreign rule. But if our lords had not chased us eastwards out of the country for eight hundred years, and westwards between 1890 and 1914, there would not have been a mixed population problem in Hungary, or at least the problem would have been much smaller.

This is the reason why we accuse our lords not only of short-sightedness—they acted out of blind self-interest, and in the long run even against their own interests—but also of *treason.*

It is treason always to import foreign workers. It was treason to speak, as Count Zselenszki did, about importing 100,000 Chinese coolies, and it was treason to chase to America 1,500,000 Hungarians.

CHAPTER VIII

In June 1914 more than ten thousand of us said farewell to the country of our lords and went to America. According to some journalists we were shipped to the New World in appalling conditions, herded together like cattle. We did not mind the discomfort of travelling third class, and the bad food. We knew that we were going to a country where the gendarmes did not slap the faces of grown-up people, where the lords would not "use" our women, where one could get work and food and education. "At home"—if we could call the country of our lords our home—well, at home there was no place for us.

Those millions of us who remained in Hungary were preparing for the fourth centenary anniversary of Dózsa's execution. We made a collection to erect a statue of him.

Instead our lords started their war for the Habsburgs and the German Kaiser.

You have probably read a great deal about their war guilt in the first Great War. Your official investigation under Professor Gooch, so we are told, established that the German and Austrian lords were not alone to blame. This is not *our* opinion.

We can naturally tell the difference between the responsibility of governments and of peoples. Let us take, for instance, our case in 1849. Hungary was fighting the Habsburgs. The Czar sent

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two hundred thousand Russian *mujiks* to fight us. Shouldn't we be foolish to blame these *mujiks* for fighting us? What did a wretched *mujik* want to fight us for? He was a slave. His conditions were worse than ours. If he had any ambition, then it was to have plenty to eat, a decent roof over his head, less whipping and less toil. Was it his affair if we were beaten or not? Would his village life change, in the neighbourhood, say, of Nisnij-Novgorod, if he helped the Habsburg Kaiser to rule Hungary for another eighty years?

If we blamed someone, it was their Czar and the Russian lords.

In a war—and as a matter of fact in everything—one ought to differentiate between the people and the rulers. If we draw this difference, then we agree with your Professor Gooch and the others that *our* rulers were not much more to blame for the war than the rulers of other countries.

But *we*, we have the right to blame *our* rulers for forcing us into the war of the Habsburg and the German Kaisers in 1914. *We* had nothing to gain and everything to lose by this war. It was the same for our lords. But they did not see that by helping the two Kaisers to victory they would lose even the pretence, which they had maintained from 1867 onwards, that *their* Hungary was independent.

What did the lords want? They wanted to keep their privileges and estates, and they wanted important positions. They were always complaining between 1867 and 1914 that Kaiser Francis Joseph would not let them have a separate Hungarian Foreign Office and an entirely independent Hungarian army. Now, in 1914, instead of seeing their chance to win independence, they wholeheartedly backed the war of the Habsburgs.

At this time we had as Prime Minister Count Stephen Tisza, who hated us, the people, like poison. He was a great lord who believed that we were unripe for those liberties and rights which the people of most other countries had already got. He was livid with rage when some people in Parliament demanded for us the right to vote. It is said that this Count Tisza did not want the war of 1914. But naturally he was more loyal to Kaiser Francis Joseph than to Hungary, and when war was declared he gave his wholehearted support to it and to the Habsburgs.

Other lords did not behave much better. Count Albert Apponyi, leader of the 1848 independence party, also gave his backing to the war. He forced his party to follow his example. His party argued that the Habsburgs were very eager to present a united front to the outside world. They wanted the world to

believe that Austro-Hungary was content and united, that Hungary had real independence, that Hungary was an equal partner in the dual Monarchy. Of course it was not. It had no Foreign Office. But now was the time—so some of the deputies argued—to force the Kaiser to give Hungary real independence.

Count Apponyi did not agree. He said that the more Hungary backed the Habsburgs and the German Kaiser, the more she could count on the gratitude of Kaiser Francis Joseph. After victory, out of gratitude, the Kaiser would at last give real independence to Hungary.

Four hundred years of history had not taught these lords that the Habsburgs are not grateful. Five times these lords and their ancestors rendered voluntary help to the Habsburgs in the hope of winning their gratitude. Instead they met with treason and oppression. Francis Joseph, the old Habsburg Kaiser, was a cynical man from his youth. You will remember that the Russian Czar gave him help against us in 1849. Five years later the Crimean War broke out. The Czar asked for help from the Kaiser. Francis Joseph declined and his Foreign Minister, Prince Schwarzenberg, added the historic words (we take them from a history book) "*L'Autriche épatera le monde par son ingratitude*" (Austria will dumbfound the world with her ingratitude).

Well, Count Apponyi believed in the gratitude of the Habsburgs, and forced the 1848 party to back the war. If the party whose chief aim was to fight those who wanted to collaborate with the Habsburgs behaved in this way, then you can imagine how the other parties of our lords behaved. At this time there was not a single social democrat, socialist or agrarian socialist in the Parliament of our lords.

So the war started. We, two million of us, were mobilised and had to fight in a war which was decided upon without us. You know the story of the war of 1914–1918. You know, you have read, how hundreds of thousands of us died in the cold, snowy, stormy winter of 1914–1915 in the Carpathian mountains. You have read how we were sandwiched between Austrian and German troops, how we were machine-gunned from behind to force us to attack. You have read how the army provided us with boots with paper soles bought from war-profiteers, and how we lost our legs through frostbite. You have read how we were lied to about non-existent German–Habsburg victories, how the big defeats were kept secret, We fought and died, we were shell-shocked, we were taken prisoner, we starved, and all the while

175 566 our families got very little help, and all the while most of our lords got important jobs at home.

They were all heroes. They donned splendid uniforms and stayed at home. Naturally there were also good and honest lords. There were the Counts Batthyanyi and Michael Károlyi, who opposed the war, who were anti-German and also anti-Habsburg. They had followers. Many writers and scientists and also politicians were opposed to the war. But they were mostly silenced. They were sent to the front.

Count Michael Károlyi, for instance, who was a pacifist and anti-German, who made speeches against the war—during the war—nevertheless went voluntarily to the front because he wanted to share our fate. It was illogical of him to do this. If he had been an even greater man he would, perhaps, have chosen complete pacifism, but we could put the proper value on his behaviour.

In 1915 Count Károlyi formed a new Party of Independence, and his group sent an envoy to Rome to get in touch with the Allies. Italy was, you remember, still neutral then, and she soon turned against Germany and Austria.

In March 1915 this envoy informed the Italian Foreign Secretary, Sonnino, and the British Ambassador in Rome, Rennell Rodd:

"*The Party of Independence of Hungary thinks it necessary that the British and Italian Governments should be informed of the real mood of Hungary. The Hungarian people, the millions of Hungarian people, are not represented by 'official Hungary', but by the Party of Independence. The Hungarian Government of Count Tisza won power through an unbelievably narrow and corrupt system of ballot. The real Hungary wants peace. The chief reason for this general desire for peace is the fact that we know that this war serves only German interests. If the Germans were victorious we should be completely enslaved by the Empire of the German Kaiser.*"

Károlyi and his people tried to convince Count Tisza and the government that Italy and Rumania would soon declare war against Austro-Hungary and Germany, so that it was in the interests of Hungary to make a separate peace before this event.

For this action Károlyi was accused of high treason by the military court of Count Tisza in 1917.

The Kaiser Francis Joseph died in 1916. By this time the German war-lord Ludendorff was the real ruler of Austro-Hungary too. The new Kaiser, Emperor King Charles, was the

successor of the reactionary Crown Prince Francis Ferdinand, whose assassination was the pretext for starting the war. He was a weak and muddle-headed young man who might perhaps have been a good company commander, but certainly was a most inefficient ruler.

We were fed up with the war. We wanted peace. For Count Tisza and the other pro-German–Habsburg lords, Rumania's declaration of war against Austro-Hungary was a heaven-sent opportunity to dope us again into war-fervour. Our lords, who for eight hundred years had chased us to Rumania and imported Rumanian workers against us, used the very same Rumanians to trick us into war.

Our fervour did not last long. We once again remembered Dózsa, Petõfi and Kossuth, we remembered our old dream of a federated republic of free peoples, in place of the Habsburg Empire. This was Kossuth's dream too. Now a young writer and professor, Oscar Jászi, started to propagate the same idea. He wanted us, the Hungarians, to make peace with all the other subject peoples of the Habsburg Empire. He wanted peace. He was accused of treason.

Then after another horrible year the collapse came. For us it was no news: for most of our lords it was.

We need not tell you what those four war-years meant to *us*.

Death and misery.

By the autumn of 1918 all the troops were thoroughly fed up with war. Thousands of us deserted. In many places we revolted. The Habsburg Archduke Joseph, a "Hungarian Habsburg", who was one of the army commanders and who, among others, gave orders earlier in the war to drive us forward by machine-gunning us from behind, went on a tour of inspection. At many places he could not come near the regiments because we barricaded ourselves and would not let the generals approach.

The fronts were collapsing. Armistice and peace came. And curious things happened. Take, for instance, the story of István, a farmhand from south-western Hungary. He fought in the Austrian army in the same company as a Croat called Jan. They both fought against the Italians on the Isonzo front, and they both hated it. They both went to war because they had to. If you did not go, the gendarmes took you. If you deserted and were caught, you were shot. So they fought. After this collapse the whole army streamed back. István and Jan, who lived in neighbouring villages, went back together. They sat on the top of

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a train and were nearly killed when it passed under bridges. Then they went on foot together, glad that it was all over, and worried that they might starve to death before they reached their homes. They slept in the open fields. They ate raw potatoes and carrots which they dug up. While they tramped through the countryside, which was full of other soldiers like them, they spoke about the future. Whether the cow was still there. Whether the wife had behaved. Whether it was true that some land would be given to them now.

And so Jan and István, who had fought in the same company for four years, reached their homes in neighbouring villages. Time passed. The gentlemen were negotiating. Maps were being drawn.

It turned out that István was a very bad man whom the great free world punished for fighting. István became a defeated and punished enemy. Jan became a good man—a member of a well-rewarded, victorious nation. *The frontier between the newly created (S.H.S.) Yugoslavia and dismembered Hungary was drawn between the villages of István and Jan.*

Can you understand this? For simple people like us, it is very difficult.

CHAPTER IX

How did our lords behave during the time of the great collapse? How did they behave when it was a question of somehow saving the country by means of a separate peace and honourable conditions?

We think it is worth your while to know what they did, because we think we are telling you the truth when we say:

They have not changed, they will be just as short-sighted and just as viciously egotistical at the end of this war as they were during the collapse in 1918.

When, after the collapse of the Bulgarian front in 1918, the Prime Minister informed Parliament that the war was lost, *one of the deputies fainted from surprise.* Count Stephen Bethlen's only worry at this time was how to keep those bits of Rumanian territory which had been added to Hungary by the Treaty of Bucharest. Count Bethlen did not see the danger to Hungary. The deputy fainted from surprise. The other lords still accused Count Károlyi of treason in wanting to conclude a separate peace and make friends with the Serbs, Rumanians and Slovaks. At that time Count Tisza went to Serbia and received a Serbian

delegation whip in hand, and was very rude to them. . . .000
No, our lords were never very good so far as foresight is concerned.
You know about President Wilson's note in January 1918.728
Among the Fourteen Points one said:

> "The people of Austro-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the first opportunity of autonomous development."

President Wilson's note came on January 8th. At that time the Allies were still fighting. As we see it, President Wilson made this offer thinking that the Austrian and Hungarian lords already knew that the war was lost, but that if they were willing, by concluding a separate peace, to risk a little in order to make it shorter, a lot of bloodshed might be avoided. The war might be shortened by many months.

We wanted to accept the offer. All our leaders wanted to accept it. Count Michael Károlyi wanted to accept it. He even made public a declaration in favour of acceptance.

Our lords, Counts Tisza, Andrássy, Bethlen and the rest, advised the young king not to pay any attention to it. They called everybody a traitor who wanted to accept it.

The very same lords were prepared to accept it and to conclude a separate peace on the very same terms on October 18th 1918, nearly ten months later. But then it was too late. The Czechs and the Serbs did contribute to the Allied cause: the Czechoslovak National Council was acknowledged by the Allies.

Our lords lost the game—not only their game, but also Hungary's.

At the end of September 1918 Allied troops broke through the Bulgarian front. The Hungarian Premier was at that time an old reactionary called Wekerle. Some journalists visited him. He told them:

"I have, *of course*, known for a long time that the war was lost, but *of course* we could not do a thing, because of the Germans."

"But why didn't we make a separate peace?" one of those present asked.

"The terms were not good enough."

As for the Bulgarian collapse, he said that this would be "awkward" for the other ally of Germany—Turkey. In order to ensure that Turkey did not conclude a separate peace, we must send Hungarian troops there.

"What's the use of that?" a journalist asked.

"Nothing much; chiefly political. The Germans want it. We won't see many of those poor chaps again."

728 But "those poor chaps" were sent and promptly got killed, like so many million other poor chaps, because these foolish gentlemen still refused to learn how to think.

728 468 On October 8th the Social Democratic Party demanded in a declaration the immediate formation of a democratic government. This government, they said, must conclude a separate peace at once on the basis of Wilson's Points.

The declaration drew a true picture of Hungary's situation. For four years the people had fought for German Imperialism. The war would soon be lost. As yet there were no foreign troops on Hungarian territory. But there would be. The Hungarian people, who had been forced into this war against their will, would certainly be punished for the sins of their rulers. "The representatives of the feudal classes are still clinging to their power. We point to the hundreds of internal and external wounds of the country and tell you: This is what you have done. This is your work; yours is the responsibility."

Our lords still did not believe that the end had come. They told each other in their aristocratic clubs that the British would never let the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy collapse, just as in 1942 they told each other that the British would never permit the Russians to bomb Budapest. They thought they knew the British. After all, they had hunted with the British.

On October 17th 1918, Charles IV asked his good Austrian subjects "to form national councils for the creation of a federated State. Each nationality can form its own State autonomy."

What did the Hungarian lords do? Were they glad that independence was here at last? Oh no. *They forced the Emperor to exempt Hungary from this.* The Hungarian Premier threatened the Emperor that he would not send food to Austria if the Emperor did not add a point to this declaration stating that the integral nature of Hungary must be preserved. This is to say that the people living under the Austrian lords were given the chance to be free, but the people living under Hungarian lords were not.

Even so, the good lords were terribly worried. Their whole world collapsed when they saw that the Habsburg Kaiser was for Hungarian independence and against them. How could they call all the politicians who wanted independence traitors if even the Emperor proclaimed that Hungary might be separated from Austria?

Next day in the Hungarian Parliament the Opposition declared itself in favour of an independent Hungarian Government, a separate Hungarian Foreign Office, and peace. The big leaders of the "countocracy"—Tisza, Andrássy and the rest—protested against

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this. Prince Windischgraetz screamed at them: "You traitors! 728
We will be loyal to our German Allies to the grave." (Meaning, 668
of course, that *we*, the people, should die for the Germans.) The counts applauded. A few weeks later the very same counts who had said that being pro-Ally was treason all criticised *our* leaders for not being pro-Entente enough, and when the Allied missions arrived in Budapest it turned out that they had always hated the Germans and loved the British and the French.

Yes, they were the last to see what was coming, but when it came they had no scruples about going over from friend to foe. Count Andrássy, the famous "black Count", who was hated by the people and was leader of the reactionary aristocracy (just as Count Stephen Bethlen is leader of the countocracy today)—this "black Count Andrássy" was still a staunch supporter of the German cause on October 14th 1918.

Although the Kaiser gave Hungary independence, he insisted that she should have no separate Foreign Secretary. He won his case, and Andrássy became Foreign Secretary for both Austria and Hungary. In this capacity he promised full support to the Germans. Eleven days later he offered a separate peace. But those eleven days cost Hungary a lot.

On October 25th we elected a democratic National Council, headed by Michael Károlyi, to democratise Hungary and conclude peace. The lords still played their game of politics. A new reactionary count became premier.

On October 29th a great multitude of us wanted to go to the Royal Palace and demand that the king's deputy, Archduke Joseph, should make Károlyi premier. One of our leaders telephoned to the Archduke informing him of our intention and promising that we would "behave". The Archduke had a conference with his counts. When we arrived at the Danube bridge —a peaceful crowd, completely unarmed—three infantry companies blocked the way. We called to them to join our side, that we meant no harm. They promptly joined us, though the officers wanted them to shoot at us.

Then we tried to go on. But behind the military stood the police. They—without warning—immediately fired at us and then charged us with drawn swords. Many of us were killed, more than a hundred wounded. *We did not kill anybody.*

Then we grew angry. Together—soldiers and workers—we occupied the important public buildings. There was no resistance. The representatives of the police came to our National Council, begging our pardon, protesting that orders were orders and offering to join our council.

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668 THIS WAS OUR REVOLUTION.

728 WE WERE FIRED AT. WE DID NOT HAVE TO USE ARMS.

Our revolution succeeded without bloodshed, just as in 1848. And, just as in 1848, so also in 1918 our cynical and clever lords managed to defeat our revolution, putting the chains of slavery on us again. In November 1919 the same old gang of counts and county gentlemen ground us into the earth, and they are doing so up to this very day.

At that time we did not know this. We only knew that the hated Habsburg Empire had at last collapsed. After four hundred years of Habsburg oppression we were—so we thought—finally free.

000 Naturally we did not behave like little lambs. We were drunk with happiness because peace had come. We were drunk with hatred of our officers. We wanted to have our revenge on those leaders who had forced us into the four years' slaughter, we wanted to pay back some of the cruel officers who had treated us like beasts. We wanted land and work. We wanted to get even with the profiteers who had palmed off on us paper-soled boots for us to freeze in. And above all we wanted to get home as quickly as possible. Nobody could hold us back. From every direction we streamed into Budapest and the other cities—from the Italian front, from the Eastern front, from everywhere. We crowded the trains; we crowded the roofs of the carriages. Hundreds of us were killed as the bridges knocked us off the tops of the trains. Our mood was dangerous. We tore off the insignia from the collars of our officers. We got used to killing. We had had four years' schooling in it. But we committed only one murder.

We murdered Count Stephen Tisza, the great reactionary lord whom we held responsible for the war. Later on our lords accused some politicians and journalists of the murder of Count Tisza. Their innocence was established. No, we, the "unknown soldiers", killed Tisza. *We* are prepared to take full responsibility for this murder. Is it only our lords who have the right to send us to be slaughtered by the hundred thousand in their interests, while we have no right to revenge? No, sir.

We were in a bad mood. Four years of hell did not make angels out of us. The streets of Budapest were full of us, ragged soldiers, poor comrades twitching with shell-shock, soldiers, soldiers who were lean and fierce, like wolves.

668 There was a tremendous muddle in Budapest and the country. In Budapest alone more than three hundred thousand of us were waiting to be demobilised, to be sent home. We got roaring drunk if we had the chance. We attacked officers and gentlemen.

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Our lords grew frightened. After the front had collapsed, 668
after we had streamed back from the front in our vicious mood, after the victorious armies had begun to approach from every direction—that is, too late—they let the power fall from their hands. They were glad to give the power to the National Council, headed by the same Count Michael Károlyi who during the war had always opposed it, who had always said that the two Kaisers were the natural enemies of the Hungarian people, who was in touch with the Allies.

Count Michael Károlyi was tremendously popular with us. We remembered that the jingoist press had always accused him of treason for wanting to make peace. We remembered that during 1916 and 1917 he had even made public speeches in favour of peace. We remembered that the military court of Count Tisza had accused him of treason. A thousand years of experience has taught us that anybody whom our lords accuse of treason is on our side. We were not mistaken.

Count Károlyi became President of the Hungarian Republic. Hungary—we must mention this—seceded from Austria on October 16th 1918, before the Austro-Hungarian collapse. Károlyi came to power on November 2nd.

Our revolutionary government, composed of liberals and socialists, had to face the situation created by the sudden and complete collapse of the Habsburg Empire. Two million soldiers were streaming back from the fronts. Refugees were coming from the neighbouring countries in tens of thousands. The railway system collapsed. The whole organisation of the country collapsed. The French general in Serbia blockaded Hungary. The food situation was appalling.

Károlyi and his people had a gigantic task. To bring the chaotic and dismembered country into a state of order, to negotiate with the Allies, to prepare the way for a democratic Hungary.

The Károlyi Government's first thought was to solve the land 668
situation. They drew up a land reform programme which aimed 423
at distributing among us, the land-workers, all estates exceeding five hundred acres, for which the State would recompense the owners. They planned co-operatives and agricultural boards. And they were not just talking.

Károlyi started his land reform on his own land at the beginning of 1919. He had huge estates. He gave them all to us. We must confess that many of us thought that even Károlyi was too mild with the landowning class. But our lords considered this land reform a terrible outrage and did everything to prevent it. They successfully

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668 denounced the Karolyi Government to the foreign Allied missions
4/23 in Budapest as Bolshevik. In this way they achieved two results. Result number one was that the Allied missions turned against the man who was loyal to the idea of peace all through the war, who was against Germany all through the war. The Allied missions and Governments allowed the Rumanian, Czech and Serb forces —even after the armistice was signed—considerably to extend their occupation of purely Hungarian territories. Result number two was that in default of Allied aid the Károlyi Government was defeated by the Communists. The great lords, all the aristocrats, were very happy the day Communism was proclaimed in Hungary. They feared that the Allies might discover that Károlyi's Government was democratic, that they would help Károlyi, and that democracy would then be established in Hungary. If there were real, out-and-out Communists ruling Hungary—so the lords hoped—it would be easier to get help from the Allies against the Communists, who would be beaten. Then they could return and get back their land. The calculations of these lords, led by Count Stephen Bethlen, were right.

CHAPTER X

728 In 1919 the Károlyi Government went to pieces because of
648 the blind stubbornness of the French commander at Belgrade,
669 Franchet D'Esperay, who snubbed and humiliated the Hungarian Government—which had, after all, overthrown the war-time administration and was democratic and anti-German. At last the Károlyi Government's position became impossible. Some of the great lords, who had influence over Franchet D'Esperay, saw with pleasure that the people's Hungary—the Hungary of Károlyi and of the Communists—was left by this extreme reactionary French general to the mercies of her neighbours. They knew that the people's Hungary would in this way be defeated. The "Red" scare of the Allies was exploited by all our enemies.

On March 20th 1919, a French lieut.-colonel, a certain Vyx, handed the Károlyi Government a new order of the Allies demanding that Hungary should accept a fresh line of demarcation. Some month previously Hungary had already signed an armistice with the Allies in Belgrade. This was severe enough, cutting deeply into territories inhabited by Hungarians. Now the Allies—determined to make "Red" Hungary as small as possible—presented a new demand in the form of a fresh line of demarcation

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728 which would have given our neighbours a further two million
648 Hungarians. The Károlyi Government wanted to hold a
669 plebiscite. They wanted to ask us "What do we want? To give in to this outrage or fight on?" The Allies did not give Károlyi time for this. They demanded an answer by next day.

Károlyi did not want to take the responsibility, and he resigned. We think he was right. You see, in our eyes he represented the Western democracies and the principles of Wilson. We knew that during the four years of war he was on the side of the British, the French and the Americans. We knew that he was always anti-German and for a separate peace. Well, we thought, if the Allies treat this man like dirt, then there is nothing to hope for from the Western democracies; our only hope is Soviet Russia.

Already the Communists were very active. A great part of the Socialist Party went over to them. The country needed a united army. The Communists were able to organise it. Károlyi trusted the West. He failed. We did not blame him, but it was only right that he should take the consequences of his pro-Western policy. *We wanted now to try the ways of the East.*

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was born on March 21st 1919, thanks to the Vyx ultimatum. The president of the Hungarian Soviet Council said on that day:

"The Entente-Imperialism used democracy and the self-determination of peoples as its flag, but now, when all these principles could be realised, other ways are chosen. . . . The whole world must see that in these new territories all the food supplies will be in the power of the Entente and hundreds of thousands more refugees will flood Hungary. . . . We were convinced that the Entente wanted to conclude a just peace. But the Vyx ultimatum makes our conviction ridiculous. . . . We cannot expect anything from the West but a dictated peace. The new policy means that we want to get what we want from the East instead of the West: justice. . . . If we are to sum up impartially, we must say that everything which is happening now is doing so because the Entente forced this development."

Two days later, when Béla Kun, president of the Hungarian Soviets, broadcast a declaration to the proletariat of the world, he said:

"The ultimatum of the Entente aimed at handing over Hungary at once to the Rumanian oligarchy. The Hungarian people answered this ultimatum by the creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The Hungarian red armies fought against heavy odds. Franchet D'Esperay, the French General who had collaborated with the

728 669 648 counter-revolutionary government in Szeged, did everything he could to starve out Hungary. Food trains were stopped. The Czechs fought the red army in the north. They came quite near to Budapest and then were driven back.

Meanwhile the French right wing helped to crush democracy after the real danger, Prussian and Habsburg Imperialism, was beaten.

When Bolshevism broke out in Hungary, Benes of the Czechs, in his articles in the *Matin* and *Times*, and in his representations to the Supreme Council, supplemented the argument previously put forward by the plea that "the interest of Europe demanded that the northern part of Hungary should be given to the Czechs".

The Communist Government had to organise a red army speedily to defend Hungarian territories. Once again the world was able to watch the not very unique spectacle of "nationalist" lords, white officers, helping the enemy (Rumanian) armies which were attacking their own country. The Hungarian red army fought the Czechs and the Rumanians. *White officers sent by the counter-revolutionary government directed the Rumanian guns against Hungarians defending their territory.*

669 423 The Communist Government of Béla Kun had no time to carry through the land reform either. They declared all land exceeding a hundred acres State property without compensation. The small and medium holdings with farm or house were to remain untouched. The expropriated land the Communists wanted to turn into co-operatives, into *kolkhozes*. In most cases the expropriated landlords were asked for the time being to administer their own properties. Thus they had the nice job of guarding them for themselves.

669 648 In the summer of 1919 the Rumanians resumed their advance and occupied Budapest. G. D. H. Cole writes:

> "In November the Rumanians withdrew from Budapest after doing a great deal of damage, and took with them in their withdrawal as much of the movable property and instruments of production of the Hungarians as they were able to lay hands upon. . . . "

It was curious to watch how our lords behaved towards the Rumanians. When the Károlyi Government wanted to establish peaceful relations with all Hungary's neighbours, they started wild anti-Rumanian propaganda to make Károlyi's work more difficult. When it turned out that Károlyi really meant to distribute the land, and during the Communist regime, they suddenly discovered the solidarity of interest between Rumania

and Hungary. *At this time the Hungarian red army was defending Hungary against the Rumanians.* Our lords informed the Allied commanders that they thought it was in the interests of the country for Rumania to occupy Hungary. 669 648

The minute the Rumanians occupied Budapest all the counts, bankers and landowners returned to the capital and started to prepare the way for the counter-revolution. The white army of Admiral Horthy was waiting impatiently in the South Hungarian city of Szeged.

The diplomatic representative and commissioner of the Entente was a certain Sir George Clerk. Sir George at first negotiated with democratic politicians too, but later got to know our polite, charming and well-mannered counts. Eventually, a coalition government was formed which was sure to sign the peace treaty and give way to an out-and-out reactionary régime. After this, it was arranged that the Rumanian armies should leave Hungary.

Then the white troops of the counter-revolution entered the country of our lords, or what was left of it. The feudal lords came back with all their gendarmes and police spies. 669 648

We have told you pretty bad things about ourselves. You must not take it to heart if we tell you that *the Western Democracies thus helped back to power that very same reactionary and anti-democratic régime against which they said they were fighting.* 728

Your slogan was to make the world safe for democracy. As far as we are concerned YOU MADE HUNGARY SAFE FOR FEUDALISM.

You know, we do not generally use big and learned words about ourselves. If anything, we are realists. We either have the land or we have not. We are either beaten by the gendarmes or not. Our children either die of tuberculosis and starvation or not. You must not blame us, please, if we doubted for some time the sincerity of the great Western democracies. But facts—facts felt bitterly and directly by us—yes, these facts seemed to show that you were on the side of counter-revolution and feudalism.

Then President Wilson and others said that you were fighting for the self-determination of nations. What did we see? By the peace treaty of Trianon you put four million of us—without any plebiscite—in foreign territories. (Some people do not agree as to the numbers. But we have never heard from any authoritative British, American or French source a lower figure than 3,300,000 Hungarians placed under Rumanian, Czech and Serb rule.)

You said that you disliked composite states such as the Habsburg

669 Empire. Austria was cut to pieces because "a single state tyran
728 nising over a number of nations could not be tolerated in Europe".
But facts seemed to show that you created three Austrias in
648 the place of one; a Czechoslovakia of Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Magyars, Germans and Ruthenians; a Rumania of Rumanians, Magyars, Germans, Serbs, Bulgarians, Turks, Tartars and Gipsies; a Yugoslavia of Serbs, Magyars, Bosnians, Croats, Slovenes, Turks, Montenegrins, Vends, Rumanians, Albanians, Italians and Macedonian Greeks.

669 Well, the counter-revolutionaries of Szeged, all the big feudal
661 lords and the white army, with beautiful white feathers in their caps, came to small, dismembered Hungary. The white terror began. Whereas during the revolutionary period, after the four years of slaughtering, less than a thousand people were killed, during the law-and-order period of the counter-revolution several thousands of us were tortured to death, Jewish men and women were tortured and killed, everyone who had a part in the revolutions was imprisoned or shot—mostly the latter—and those Socialist leaders who could not be accused of anything were just assassinated.

700 We know that the British *people* were revolted by the white terror of the country of our lords. In protest against the massacre of our leaders, the Labour and Socialist International attempted in June 1920 to organise an international boycott of Hungary. They did not succeed.

Too many people, all over the world, detest the word "revolution". *We dislike the counter-revolutionaries.* In our history the revolutionaries like Dózsa and his people defended Hungary, and the counter-revolutionaries who tortured him to death sold the country to the Turks. The *Kuruc* of Rákóczi were the revolutionaries, and the big lords who betrayed the country to the Habsburgs were the counter-revolutionaries.

Petöfi and Kossuth were fighting for Hungarian independence. They were revolutionaries. The Habsburg-collaborationist lords were the counter-revolutionaries.

Jesus was a revolutionary. Caiaphas and Pilate were the counter-revolutionaries.

Those who are on the side of the Hungarian people, who want to fight for our health and happiness, cannot have anything to do with the present régime, which has as "moral capital" the counter-revolution of Szeged and the white terror. These gentlemen who protest so much about their nationalism are suitable partners of Hitler and Mussolini, those two counter-revolutionary

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gangsters. They are suitable partners of Baron Mannerheim, the enemy of the Finnish people, of Franco and Antonescu, those three people-hating counter-revolutionaries who crushed our organisations.

These gentlemen have done everything they could to make revolution appear in the light of a hideous, disgusting mass-terror, and counter-revolution everything that is beautiful, clean and holy. Our big lords always refer to counter-revolutionaries as clean, nice and well-clad gentlemen. We did not object to the manicured fingers of the white officers, but to the fact that they tortured our womenfolk to death. We did not object to the elegance of the former Prime Minister, Bárdossy, when he went to Hitler to sell the country. We did not object to his morning coat, but to his treachery.

We must confess that revolutionaries do not usually wear morning coats and top hats. But we know equally well that Jesus Christ, for whose teachings the assassin Hitler pretends to fight, was not among the well-clad men of his time. Caiaphas wore a nicer gown, and Pilate was certainly more elegant. We do not contest the fact that Socrates could not keep up with the fashions. We know that neither Dózsa nor the *Kuruc* wore shirts frilled according to the taste of those times. Kossuth and Petõfi were not fashionable. But those white-feathered and white-gloved dandies who organised the White Terror in Hungary were very elegant.

We still do not like counter-revolutionaries.

We used to *think*. And this is no doubt a revolutionary thing in the country of our lords. We wanted to lead a human life. This is also revolutionary. The scum is here to serve and to be kicked out.

Yet we still cannot believe that revolution is such a bad thing. When some professor discovers a wonderful new cure for some disease, everybody says that the new discovery *revolutionises* medical science. Why aren't the big discoveries called a "counter-revolutionary" step forward?

After the Great War our revolution had one aim: to raise Hungary to the level of the Western Democracies; to create a Hungary where the eighteen-hour working day was not enforced by the gendarmerie, where the life of the people was better than ours at present. We did not succeed. But our counter-revolutionary lords told you a lot of nonsense about our revolution.

Our lords told you that this 1918–19 revolutionary period was ugly. There was nothing to eat. There was no organisation. All sorts of poorly dressed fellows were in command; servants became arrogant, estates were confiscated, and gentlemen were forced

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to call all sorts of workers "comrades". Our lords judged the revolutionaries chiefly by their appearance and smell. They also accused them of clumsiness: that they did not serve the interests of the country well, by drawing up the terrible Trianon peace treaty.

Is it necessary to point out that the war of 1914–18 was not started by the revolutionaries? The want and privation in Hungary were not caused by the revolution, but by the lost war. The whole continent suffered because after four years of mass-slaughter it took nearly two years before the supply of food in Europe could be organised.

For Trianon, for dismembering Hungary, not we but the counter-revolutionaries are responsible. Between 1908 and 1914 it was the counter-revolution that hindered the formation of the people's system of representation. This system would perhaps have prevented our entering the First Great War. After the lost war the counter-revolution, in its fear of land reform and blind hatred of the people, associated itself with the reactionary French general and the Rumanians to defeat the Hungarian Republic, and did not care that the price was the further dismembering of the country. Then for a period of twenty years this same dismemberment was exploited by them to keep awake a blind chauvinism, to distract our attention from our appalling social conditions by pointing at our neighbours and saying, "You would have land, you would have a better life, if they had not taken away large pieces of our territory."

CHAPTER XI

728 On March 1st the National Assembly—elected in a White
648 Terror atmosphere—made the Commander-in-Chief of the counter-revolutionary troops, the former Habsburg Admiral Nicholas Horthy, Regent of Hungary. Act 1 of 1920 "decreed the suspension of royal power and established a regency for a transitional period while maintaining the institution of a kingdom". From this time onward the world press often made fun of the kingless kingdom ruled over by an Admiral without a fleet.

This counter-revolutionary régime nevertheless had the same difficulties with the Entente as the Communists had had. The Paris Supreme Council sent an ultimatum demanding the signing of the proposed peace treaty. If Hungary refused to accept the terms there would be a fresh blockade.

The people's Hungary did not give in to such threats; the lords' Hungary did. It is true that the Hungarian Government received a covering letter signed by Millerand which stated that 728 648

> "later on, when the Boundary Commissions have begun their work, should they be of opinion that the provisions of the Treaty are unjust in character and that the remedying of this injustice is in the general interest, they will be in a position to report such opinion to the Council of the League of Nations. The Allied and Associated Powers agree that in such cases, provided a request to that effect be made by one of the interested parties, the Council of the League shall be entitled to offer its good services for the purpose of changing the original frontier by peaceful means."

This covering letter was dated May 6th 1920. On June 4th 1920 the Hungarian Delegates signed the Treaty of Trianon. Eighteen days later, on June 22nd 1920, the Council of Ambassadors gave the Boundary Commissions instructions contradictory to the promises contained in the letter, strictly forbidding those Commissions to take into consideration any racial, religious or economic interests rendering necessary even the slightest change of the frontiers fixed in the treaty.

We have already spoken about the responsibility of governments and that of peoples. We have pointed out that for the lost war and for the dismemberment of our country our lords are responsible *to us*.

But not so much to *you*.

Do not forget what your official investigators found concerning the war guilt in 1914–18.

So we must be fair, and say that when the peace conference forced the reactionary Horthy régime to sign the Trianon Peace Treaty in 1920 it committed a gross injustice.

Hungary lost 72% of her territory. Germany—who according to you bore the chief guilt—lost only 10%.

Hungary lost 64% of her inhabitants, Germany less than 10%.

Hungary lost 32% of pure Hungarians, Germany only 8% of Germans.

Rumania was given 110,000 square kilometres of Hungary and Hungary was left with 93,000 square kilometres.

G. D. H. Cole wrote in 1933:

> "Any map showing the political and ethnical divisions of post-War Europe will reveal that only on the West do the territorial frontiers of post-War Hungary coincide with the

728 frontier drawn according to ethnical divisions. All along the
648 north there is a long stretch of territory with a Magyar majority that has been assigned to Czechoslovakia; down most of the eastern frontier there is a similar stretch of territory assigned to Rumania; in the south large bodies of Magyars are now under Yugoslav rule, and finally in Central Transylvania . . . there are considerable enclaves of Magyar population under Rumanian rule. . . . It is inevitable that Hungary should look covetously across her restricted frontiers to the immediately contiguous territories in which Magyar populations predominate."

648 If you want to understand the present and see something of the future, we must make you acquainted with these facts. We have given you ample proof that we do not love our lords. *But in wanting to get back those parts of the country where nearly one-third of the total number of Magyars lived—in this we always were united.* Our lords wanted St. Stephen's Hungary. We wanted Hungarian Hungary. That was the difference.

And the Hungary of our lords went year after year to the "law-court of the democracies", the League of Nations, and presented her case, pointed to the injustice and asked for peaceful revision. But nothing happened. And when the same Rumania which had been given a far bigger territory by the Allies than that which was left for Hungary, when this well-rewarded Rumania turned against her former Allies, she wasn't considered such a "bad boy" by the Allied press as the Hungary of our lords, which went over to Hitler's side, certainly much against the will of her population.

000 Do not forget, please, that we are talking about the *countries of lords*. We are talking of the Hungarian nation (that is, the Hungarian ruling class) as compared with the Rumanian nation (that is, the Rumanian ruling class). We do not mean that the Rumanian people are bad or that they are responsible for the policy of their lords.

We like the Rumanians, and we know that they hate Nazi-Fascist oppression just as much as we do. But if you judge governments and *not peoples*, it seems to us unjust to think the Hungarian lords worse than the Rumanian lords, who treacherously turned against their former Allies and forced hundreds of thousands of good simple Rumanians to be slaughtered in fighting against the good simple Russians.

642 We do not want to say too much of the 1920–1939 period, the period of the Horthy–Bethlen régime. Hungary was "con-

solidated" during this period. There was law and order. The 642
foreign visitors who came to Budapest found a clean and beautiful city. The police were polite. The gentlemen who eagerly invited the foreigners to their homes spoke excellent English and French. They smoked English cigarettes and most of them wore suits made of English materials. It was a pleasure to hunt with them. An English lord no doubt felt quite at home in the spacious county residences of our lords. He never went behind the stables, where we lived. . . . How we lived, and still live, we gave you some idea in the first chapter of this book.

But life in Hungary was not exactly as charming and nice as the stray Britisher saw it.

Count Stephen Bethlen, the successor of the "black Count" Andrássy, who was for eleven years Prime Minister of the country, inaugurated the first fascist dictatorship in Europe, even before that of Mussolini. He did it very cleverly. He did not abolish the parliamentary system. He paid lip service to a "qualified de- [641]
mocracy", believing that we, the people, were not ready for political rights. Only 25% of the rural population had a right to vote.[1]

Instead of describing the Bethlen election system in so many learned words, let us tell you how we saw it at that time.

Let's say that to-morrow is election day. Those fortunates 666
among us who have paid all their taxes, who can prove that in 1918–19 they did not take part in any political activities, who are more than twenty-six and who can prove that they went to school and have lived for six years in the same place—well, they have a right to vote. To-morrow they can go to the election committee and say openly, in the presence of the gendarmerie commandant, the district commissioner and the village mayor, that they vote against the government. For doing this one is usually punished. Next year you pay a higher tax, you will not be able to borrow the village threshing machine, and so on and so forth.

Still, several hundreds of us are determined to vote against the government.

The gendarmerie arranges special "traffic regulations" in the village. The pro-government voters must gather in Oxmarket square, the opposition voters in Haymarket square.

The voting begins. First the pro-government people are permitted to vote. Then the opposition. If there is a danger that the government candidate will not get enough votes, the gendarmes simply make new traffic regulations and close the way between Haymarket square and the election-building.

It is all quite simple.

How did the opposition nevertheless get some votes? Well,

[1] [In the 1920-1939 period -- Analyst]

666 first of all there is a secret ballot in the cities. And then in some districts we are willing to risk a lot—we declare ourselves pro-government, and when we get to the committee we vote against the government.

642 In Austria, at the beginning of this period, the social democratics were in power. Many of the important Habsburg civil servants and army officers fled to Hungary, where the reactionary feudal régime gladly received them, paid them pensions and gave them important jobs.

The Horthy–Bethlen régime consisted of such people, of second and third generation Austrians (the descendants of the Metternich and Baron Bach Gestapo), of the landed aristocracy and the more backward elements of landless nobility, who always thought that the country ought to provide them with bread-and-butter jobs in the civil service.

798 The régime inaugurated systematic anti-Semitism. The Association of Awakening Magyars tortured Jews and conducted Streicher-
661 like propaganda against them. The Bethlen set passed the first anti-Jewish law in Europe after the last war, when it introduced the "numerus clausus", making it practically impossible for Jews to attend the universities.

The Jewish question is a rather delicate one. Let us quote one of Károlyi's former Ministers, the Jew Oscar Jászi, at present Professor of Oberlin College, U.S.A., who was and is a radical liberal and has lived in exile since 1919.

> "This anti-Semitism [that of the Horthy–Bethlen régime] is very characteristic, as it is the only serious, strong moral reaction of the régime. And even this anti-Semitism is faked, as they want to get rid, not of the big mistakes of Jewry, but of that Western culture and liberty which these illiterates associate with Jewry.
>
> "By the way, for this unlimited anti-Semitism Jewry itself and the whole of Hungarian liberalism is also responsible. During the last twenty-five years [Jászi wrote in 1920] the Jewish question has become *taboo* in Hungary. . . . It was forbidden to criticise or warn the Jews. Anybody who, for instance, stated that there were more Jews in the leading positions of intellectual life than their percentage and their intellectual and moral value could justify; anybody who cared to analyse those harmful qualities which were evolved among the Jews during centuries of ghetto life; who tried to hint that while hundreds of thousands of land-workers were emigrating the invasion of foreign profiteers represented a danger to the simple

114 † [the Horthy-Bethlen regime; 1920-1989 — Analyst]

culture of the villages . . . such a man was attacked as an uncultured, rough, dangerous anti-Semite and life was soon made impossible for him."

The Horthy–Bethlen régime, writes Jászi,

"incited the mob to anti-Semitism, but at the same time the Jewish bank- and profiteer capital was growing freely, and the exploitation of the workers reached a record pitch. At the same time, this 'national and Christian' Hungary was again and again ready to serve Parisian Jewish finance."

Count Bethlen, the clever Count Bethlen, stopped open and official anti-Semitism. He stopped the White Terror of his friends. He did all this *after* the Allies gave political and financial support to the Horthy régime. He said that he could stop the White Terror only if the Allies helped the White Terrorists. And so the murderers of thousands of progressive people, labour leaders and Jews, were backed by American, British and French financiers in order to "consolidate" Hungary and establish a liberal parliamentary rule.

You saw what was meant by parliamentarianism during the Horthy–Bethlen régime. But we must tell you a bit more about Bethlen. In the country where 2,242 persons had more land than 4,000,000 of us, Count Bethlen said in Parliament in 1921:

"*In this State, where private property is sacred, to ask for land reform is like asking for my pants.*"

So much for Count Bethlen's democratic sentiments. In 1943 Bethlen sent envoys to neutral capitals, saying that he represented the only anti-Nazi force in Hungary. He wanted the Allies to set him up after the war as a great democratic politician.

In 1938 he wanted to prove to Hitler what a good pro-Nazi he was. He said:

"*Though the Hungarian Government (under Count Bethlen) was free to choose, it refused to join the Little Entente, thus rendering an invaluable service to Germany and making impossible the creation of a strong bloc antagonistic to Germany.*"

Well, this nice gentleman came to power by means of foreign loans, and fell from it when they stopped. But during the eleven years of his rule he laid the solid foundations of that policy which pushed the country of our lords into the war as accomplices of Hitler.

The democratic consolidation of the Bethlen régime was a very clever piece of work.

It was not anti-Semitic. The Jews were permitted to run

642 Hungarian industry and commerce provided they did not
661 attempt to meddle in politics. In order to keep their financial power they were forced to give political backing to Count Bethlen's "Unity Party".

There was parliamentarianism. This meant that 90% of the deputies were created by the government.

665 Even a Social Democratic Party existed, but it was forced *to*
642 *sell us out first.* This was perhaps the cleverest trick of the "black Count".

The Social Democratic leader was a former locksmith, Charles Peyer. Before the war he became secretary of the Trade Union Council. In 1919 he became Minister of Interior in a very short-lived government formed after the Communist collapse. Then he became Minister of Public Welfare in the reactionary government created with the help of the Allied representative, Sir George Clerk. In 1920 he was in Geneva at an international congress when he heard that Horthy and Bethlen had murdered the two other labour leaders, Somogyi and Bacsó. He did not dare to return, but a year later Bethlen invited him to come home. *He had an offer to make.*

665 Bethlen detested the idea of a land reform which would mean
642 the abolition of the feudal system. But at the same time he had to prove to the outside world that his Hungary was "nice"
423 and democratic. So he made his famous offer. The result *was an agreement by which the Social Democratic Party was allowed to exist, provided it undertook no activities among the four million landless agricultural labourers.*

This agreement was one of the chief tricks by which our lords, almost alone in Europe, have so long been able to postpone all questions of land reform. And it has very effectively removed any danger that we—the land-workers and industrial workers—might get some say in the affairs of the country and realise our aspirations for civilised existence.

And of course by permitting the Trade Unions and the Social Democratic Party *to exist but not to act*, Bethlen could say to the Western world that Hungary was a democracy.

The Trade Union officials and Social Democratic leaders were forbidden to give the lie to Bethlen's propaganda about his wonderful democratic consolidation. These leaders were happy to be alive and happy to keep "the progressive flame" flickering in the country of our lords.

This agreement was concluded in December 1921. Peyer and his friends of the labour leadership became somewhat unpopular with their own people.

665 They defended themselves by saying:

642 1. They concluded this agreement with Bethlen's Government. That government might go, and then labour would be
423 free to act.

2. This was a tactical step to save the existence of the Party and the Trade Unions.

3. Even during the period of voluntary passivity, industrial labour could go on organising and educating its own masses.

4. The land-workers were a backward, uneducated mass.

We do not want to pass judgment. We know that the peasants are a conservative lot. We know that the landless land-workers are often called peasants, thereby confusing the industrial workers, who dislike peasants. But the fact remains that the Bethlen–Peyer agreement was one of the most important pillars supporting the camouflaged dictatorship of Hungarian feudalism.

423 Our lords had other tricks up their sleeve. They even pretended
565 to carry out some land reform. This trick also worked. Horthy created a new Hungarian knighthood, the so-called "Order of Heroes". Officially all those Hungarians who had fought exceedingly well in the war of 1914–18 could become "heroes". In fact, all the White Terrorist boys were knighted, all the members of Horthy's White Army, all the friends and servants of our lords. About fifty thousand other ranks received some land which had been taken away from "traitors" like Count Károlyi and his friends. In this way Bethlen could say to the Allies that he was carrying out land reform, and he also had a trustworthy defence guard for his régime.

The gentry were an important pillar of the Horthy–Bethlen rule. *The gentry are usually landowners in theory but not in practice.*
565 They wear a signet ring with the family emblem on it, and have the manners and customs of a country squire, a lot of dissatisfaction, an empty pocket and a great craving for a rich, elegant life. They are—or pretend to be—members of a noble landowning family which lost its estates because of "them". "They" vary quite a lot. "They" are the Jews, "they" are the progressives, "they" are those red skunks who brought in a law forcing the nobility to pay taxes.

We have already mentioned that Hungary had a decentralised
641 administration and that the counties—"the noble counties"—
647 had à lot of power. The gentry—the gentlemen—were the Civil Servants of the State or county. Trade or industry or any profession was naturally considered below the dignity of the gentry.

2:Paloczy-Horvath H-3 (no date)1944 EC1 Hungary EC1

641 Well, Count Bethleń "consolidated" his rule chiefly with their
647 help. He forced the country to give armchair jobs to most of the gentry. You want proof? *Pre-1914 Hungary had less Civil Servants than post-Trianon Hungary.* Hungary's territory was reduced by 72%, her population by 64%, but instead of reducing the Civil Service, Count Bethlen *increased* it by at least two-thirds.

641 *We* paid the taxes; why should he care? The landowners
651 were protected. The great landowners paid 7.62 *pengoes* per acre, the smallholders 12 *pengoes* per acre. The workers in the factories and on the land paid, proportionately to their income, 22% more tax than the rich.

So, as you see, the Horthy–Bethlen régime not only abolished all the reforms, but quite effectively ensured that we should not get any help from inside or from abroad.

We were beaten, and our lords were safe. They set to work to wreck our future too. They called Hungary a "kingless kingdom". You can make funny jokes about it, but this phrase, too, was a trick of our lords. By calling Hungary a kingdom, they meant that the peace treaties were not valid. Only the king, with St. Stephen's crown on his head, could make a treaty. This meant that Hungary would have to get back her thousand-year-old frontiers.

CHAPTER XII

LET US tell you now what we think about this problem of St. Stephen's frontiers. Listen, please, because you will never achieve peace in our part of the world unless you see clearly the rôle of our lords.

Your rich people talk about "the white man's burden" in Africa and India. Well, our lords could talk in the same way about the "white count's burden". It is very simple. The white count's burden is to rule the Danube basin; to rule the despised workers in Hungary, Rumania, Croatia; to rule a lot of Slavs and Germans. Why should he rule them? Because the "white counts" are infinitely better than anybody else in the Danube basin.

We think that we shall only have peace if we all accept the fact that we are neither better nor worse than our neighbours, and that we must live side by side with them on the *basis of equality of opportunity, right and obligation.* Well, our lords will never acknowledge that a Rumanian or Czech lord is just as good as they are.

Our lords are a proud lot. They like to be important. They think and talk all the time about the Hungary of a thousand

years, St. Stephen's Hungary, which is one of the oldest states in the world that has existed in unbroken succession. You see, *their* Hungary is an aristocrat among the countries. They despise such newly-created countries as Rumania or Yugoslavia, always forgetting that every person and every people have just as long an ancestry as any other person or people.

Our lords talk about Hungary's cultural superiority. Well, we are not elegant lords, but we do not consider bragging and self-praise good manners. It may or may not be true that there is more "culture" in Hungary than in Rumania, but if this is so it is certainly not the fault of the Rumanian people. And it would not be a reason why our lords should rule them.

But if our lords could put St. Stephen's crown on the head of any king, it would mean that equality of peoples was not accepted in the Danube basin, that people would be taught to hate and despise each other instead of living together in peace. Those nice American business men or British lords who would like to give us a king ought to know that by creating a kingdom for us they would hurt not only us but their own interests too, because after all they cannot profit from wars, revolutions and disorder. Or can they?

We have said that Count Bethlen and his friends set to work to wreck our future. They firmly took over public education, the press and the radio. They poisoned, or tried to poison, our minds against all our neighbours; they taught false history to our children. They trained the children as you train dogs to hate and despise without thinking.

They wrecked our future pretty thoroughly. While they did everything to cloud and poison the minds of the young, they directed Hungarian policy towards the present catastrophe. On two occasions—in 1921 and 1926—President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia offered Count Bethlen a revision of the Czech–Hungarian frontier, offering to return certain territories.

Bethlen and Horthy did not accept this because they—the rulers of the thousand-year-old Hungary—did not want to become members of the newly-created Little Entente of the Succession States. They wanted to have unsatisfied national claims with which to work on us. And mainly they wanted back the St. Stephen frontiers with all their foreign populations. You see, the "white count's burden" again.

At this time our lords were still anti-German because there was a democratic régime in Germany. They turned pro-German in 1933, when Hitler made Germany safe for the Junkers, and pro-Austrian in 1934, when the Catholic-Fascists destroyed Austrian democracy.

661 Hungary—even Trianon Hungary—is a good little country. She has rich fields, mines, rivers, forests, factories, and people who know how to work. She could provide a full and happy life for all her inhabitants. Hungary was financially under League of Nations guardianship. When Jeremiah Smith, a decent Boston lawyer, the League's commissioner general in Hungary, returned to America, he showed conclusively in his final report that Hungary's finances were in order. Count Bethlen and his friends wrecked them in five years.

At the beginning of Count Bethlen's rule we learnt a lot of new words. One was "consolidation", meaning that the White Terrorist gangsters and robbers became consolidated as our rulers. The other word was "*panama*". It is the Hungarian word for official racketeering and embezzling, taken from the Panama Canal scandals.

If an official steals public money, that is *panama*. If he gets a contract for his son-in-law, that is *panama*. If there is a government loan for small farmers and city gentry get it, that is *panama*.

Well, during Count Bethlen's rule we read about a new *panama* almost every month. Horthy and the "black Count" did not steal themselves—they only wanted power; but they let their friends and followers *panama* a lot. *During Bethlen's rule—according to Supreme Court verdicts—many millions were stolen in the Ministries of War, the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Public Welfare and Finance.* Cabinet Ministers, Under-Secretaries and departmental heads were accused, and many a time convicted, of accepting bribes, embezzling public money or profiting by dirty financial deals. The mayors of seventeen cities were convicted for the same reason.

This was the law and order the Allies helped to establish.

We are an outspoken lot, and we tell the truth even if it is unpleasant. So you can believe us when we say that *in this respect the lower-grade Civil Servants, police and gendarmerie were honest even during this period.* There was a saying that you could not bribe a small clerk or policeman, but you could bribe His Excellency the Cabinet Minister.

Anyhow, during Count Bethlen's Christian, national and democratic rule corruption and Fascism reigned and the way was paved for national catastrophe.

642 The Horthy–Bethlen set built up a very effective police force, gendarmerie and political police. Long before we heard of the word "Gestapo" we knew what was meant by it. Anyone attempting to work for progress came up against the Gestapo of our lords. Hungary was made safe for lords. The lords ruled through

642 the government and their police. Everything needed government permission. You could not make a speech, start a newspaper or even write an article without government approval. Newspapers and books were banned and confiscated. People were interned. Our leaders were shadowed and imprisoned on the least little suspicion.

The real opposition to Count Bethlen succeeded once or twice in putting in *their* new word—"counter-selection". By this they meant that Bethlen and his set selected "safe" persons for parliament, the press, the opposition, professions, universities . . . they made quite sure of not letting anybody into any key position who might be dangerous to their feudal rule or might give away the show of camouflaged dictatorship.

Well, this was what we meant when we said that the Horthy–Bethlen rule wrecked our future (and thereby incidentally helped to wreck Europe's future).

668 One of our leaders, Imre Kovács, wrote that our lords wanted to keep Hungary as a sort of National Park of Feudalism in the middle of Europe, very much like the American National Parks, which preserve conditions as they were long ago.

This National Park of Feudalism was the aim of our lords between the two wars. Of course, they talked a lot about having been defeated in 1918, but they went on managing their huge estates, driving about in their expensive cars, having a good time with their beautiful mistresses, while we had even less to eat and even more to oppress us than before. It was the same in Germany. The "Nazis" of 1914–18—that is, the Junker landlords, factory owners and generals—soon asserted *their* victory, though the German people were beaten. The lost war of their lords gave the very same lords a good excuse to defeat them.

In Hungary the victory of the lords became apparent earlier. Very soon after the revolution had been defeated Bethlen and Horthy completed the National Park of Feudalism with its lovely democratic camouflage. But within the National Park *we* did not stay unchanged. *Our lot grew worse, our understanding clearer.*

We learnt a great deal during the war and revolutions. We thought a great deal about our defeats. We began to discover that understanding the world was not a privilege of our lords, and that if we thought industriously, courageously and determinedly we might perhaps understand the world better than they did.

Land-workers started to organise. It was illegal to do so. We organised. People sent us books and helped to educate us clandestinely. This was illegal, too. The Socialists and industrial workers were forbidden to establish contact with us. Some did. Our land-

668 worker movement—deep under the ground of the feudal National Park—got a real start. We knew then, and we know still, that our war against the lords will be a long war with huge losses. But we started to prepare. Of course you do not expect us to mention names and facts about our movement. Armies at war do not give away their secrets.

But we started to organise on a grand scale. Thanks to the cold dictatorship and counter-selection of our lords, many persons from above joined us. We had our fifth column everywhere, from the aristocratic clubs and ministries down to the pubs where the village gentry met. So the Horthy–Bethlen Gestapo was not very effective against us.

When Count Bethlen resigned in 1931, because he could get no more foreign loans and because he had led the country into bankruptcy, we were hopeful. An insignificant old aristocrat was chosen as his successor in the aristocratic clubs where our premiers are made. We thought that our life would be easier, that our organisation would meet with fewer obstacles.

We were sadly mistaken. With Bethlen out of the way the petty accomplices of the White Terrorist lords soon came to power. The Horthy–Bethlen "counter-selection" worked well as far as the safety of feudalism was concerned. But the small gentry, and those lower middle class men who pretended to be gentry, wanted a larger share of the profit. Our counts are a pretty cynical lot, but at least they have some sense of humour and some taste. And anyhow they had quite as much wealth as they wanted. After the eleven years of cynically cold and well-camouflaged terror of the "black Count", their hungry henchmen, who had no taste and less humour, seized the direct power. Bethlen and his friends had to be satisfied with exercising ultimate control from behind the scenes, through Horthy. Of course they did not lift a finger to save us—the people—or their beloved "culture" from the brutally stupid "Gömbösists".

672 661 The outside world learnt in 1932 that a strong man had taken over rule in Hungary. He was General Gömbös, a Hungarian nobleman. Well, this Gömbös was not strong but mean and hysterical like his great master, Hitler. He was not Hungarian but German, his real name being Graner. His mother could not speak a word of Hungarian. He was not a nobleman, but only pretended to be one. He was not a general, but only a Captain of the Reserve who forced Horthy to promote him to the rank of general from that of captain.

Gömbös' rule was as full of obnoxious lies as his person. He was one of the fiercest White Terrorists at the beginning of the

Horthy rule. He and his friends placed time-bombs in democratic clubs, they robbed and beat up the Jews, wrecked the printing plants of democratic newspapers, burnt progressive books. They organised the concentration camps of the Horthy-Bethlen rule, into which thousands of us were herded a few days after the counter-revolutionary troops entered Hungary.

During the first few years of Bethlen's "consolidation" they were forced to disappear from the public scene. In the middle twenties they were slowly permitted to reappear as government-created yes-men deputies, as the mayors of unfortunate towns, as officials in various ministries. During the first two years of the thirties these people organised themselves and demanded power. They were dangerous to our big lords, and the times were dangerous also. Some say one of the reasons why Horthy and Bethlen and the inner circle of aristocrats, like Counts Sigray and Pallavicini, let the Gömbös gang win power was because they did not want to be directly responsible for the period to come.

Anyhow, Graner-Gömbös came to power and promptly announced that he was going to start a new and glorious millennium in Hungarian history. Next day the Budapest wits called him "Gömbölini" or "Adolf Graner". "Gömbösism" was a less effectively camouflaged and more stupid edition of the Horthy-Bethlen fascism. During the Gömbös era, to believe in progress, in good neighbourship, in science, was high treason to the "real Hungarian spirit" incarnate in Gömbös-Graner, the son of a Svabian market-woman. To build up the Gömbös version of true Hungarianism the political police was enlarged and the political side of the military police was reorganised and doubled.

These two police forces are the Hungarian Gestapo, directed by such true Hungarians as Herr Schweinitzer of the political police, and a lot of German generals of the General Staff. These two forces naturally fought us. You read too much about Gestapos, so we will not describe to you how these forces fought against us, how they beat up keen young students, writers, self-taught landworkers, how they tortured us, how they managed to send many of us into their prisons and concentration camps.

The glorious Gömbös era saw gendarmes destroying our villages, and almost illiterate Svabian petty criminals becoming "leaders of true Hungarian culture".

Gömbös made many trips to Berlin and Rome, with the approval of Horthy and Horthy's principal adviser, Count Bethlen. and the Hungarian people were robbed of all their rights and any possibility of halting their rulers on the road to war.

2:Paloczy-Horvath H-3 (no date)1944 EC1 Hungary EC1

642 Gömbös died in 1936. The next premier, Darányi, went on with his work, and in 1938 a former friend of Gömbös, Béla Imrédy, came to power. In many things he is like Gömbös. He is a great Christian Hungarian nobleman, a member of the Heinrich family—three-quarters German and one-quarter Jewish. He introduced anti-Semitic laws into Hungary and tried to out-Nazi the Nazis. He was kicked out by our lords when he started to talk about land reform. They simply denounced him as being partly of Jewish origin. Imrédy then became one of the leaders of the Hungarian Nazis.

CHAPTER XIII

000 THE YEARS between the two wars changed us a lot. Bitter experience taught us to look at things as they are, and not as we would like them to be. We, the workers in the factories and on the land, joined by many writers, scientists, journalists and members of the professional classes, watched our rulers and the outside world. Our friends and leaders read, travelled and observed a lot. And they reported the truth to us—not like some diplomats, who report to their governments what the latter want to hear.

And the truth looked pretty black in 1938. It seemed that great countries like America, Great Britain and France did not want to fight *our enemies*. Our enemies nowadays go under the name of "Nazis", "fascists", "aggressors", "militarists". It also seemed that these Western Powers did not care a tinker's curse for the "small countries". Japan took Manchuria and the Great Powers looked passively on. Hitler took Germany. The German people tried by every means—smuggled letters, the books of exiled people, the witness of those who escaped from concentration camps—to inform the world that *peace would be Hitler's next victim.* They cried for help and pointed out that the rule of the Gestapo would make them entirely helpless, that if appeasement went on they would become utterly helpless tools of Hitler.

Hundreds of books and thousands of articles were written by Germans to convince the world that in a country ruled by efficient, ruthless and unscrupulous gangsters it would be impossible for the people to find a way to defend themselves; that such gangsterism might be thoroughly unpopular and universally hated, but at the same time perfectly secure.

And the Great Powers entered into diplomatic relations with Hitler.

:Paloczy-Horvath H-3 (no date)1944 EC1 Hungary EC1

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Before the war, the Italian people lived for more than ten years, and the German people for seven years, under such a tyranny, and got no help from outside. They asked for help. People escaped and cried aloud to the world about the horrors inside Germany and about the future, when Hitler would let those horrors loose on the world. A huge library could be filled with articles, speeches and books uttering such warnings. *And nothing happened.*

We watched all this and got more worried every day. Hitler and Mussolini received financial help from the Western Democracies. Our Nazis grew more and more triumphant and optimistic. The Hoare–Laval pact, or the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, was *their* victory.

The White Terrorists appeared again. Their actions showed us clearly when the people's cause suffered a defeat anywhere. Was Mussolini permitted to massacre the Abyssinians? Next day Jewish students were beaten up in Budapest University. Did Hitler march into the Rhineland or Austria? Next day the village White Terrorists tortured the leaders of the land-workers.

Each victory of the Nazi–Fascist militarists in Spain, in Munich, in Prague, made the White Terrorists bolder. They now adopted the catchword "Arrow Cross"—*i.e.*, they became Hungarian Nazis. They boasted that the rich Jewish financiers had been frightened into financing them, and that the Fascists in Spain, Germany and Italy received loans from France, England and America.

We watched with cold fear in our hearts. Would the people of France, Britain and America let their lords and banks and appeasers permit the Nazi-Fascists to be helped to complete victory?

Our leaders, our advisers, the young writers who travelled abroad, said "No". They said that it would take a long time before the voice of the simple people abroad was heard. At present they "minded their own business". At present they believed their governments when they were told that the way to fight gangsters was to let them go on robbing and murdering. But soon it would be demonstrated to them that the appeasers were wrong, and then the great Western World would become our Allies in fighting all the Nazi-Fascists, from Hitler and Mussolini to Franco, Horthy, Mannerheim and the rest. They—our leaders and advisers—urged us to organise, to learn and to prepare. Our day would come.

But meanwhile every day our enemies inside the country grew not only bolder but stronger too. And the outside world looked

very black. We know you are all sick and tired of hearing about that obnoxious Munich agreement. But stop and think a minute how Munich looked to us from the east, just across the frontier of Hitler-Germany, under our Fascist rule.

It looked almost hopeless. And then, one day at the end of March 1939, we heard a terrible thing. We learnt that on March 17th, two days after Hitler marched into Prague, the British and German industrialists had made an agreement to exploit Europe. Our Arrow Cross was triumphant, our political police interned hundreds of people, and our leaders were silent. We asked them, "*Does this mean that the civilised West will fight on the side of Hitler?*" They said they did not believe that, but there was fear in their eyes, and they began to spend sleepless nights.

It is pretty obvious to you why workers all over the world hate Nazi-Fascism. But perhaps we ought to point out why the Hungarian land-workers are such bitter enemies of Hitler. It is not only because he is the ally of our feudal lords. *Hitler does not want to give land to the small people.* During Hitler's seven years' rule before the war, almost half a million small holdings were forcibly incorporated into bigger estates and the independent small holders sent into industry, to be wage-slaves of Nazi rearmament. During Hitler's rule the big estates in Germany grew in number and in size.

We want land. There is in us a thousand-year-old craving for land. We do not want much land—we landless land-workers—only enough to hold a small house, a stable with a cow and a horse, a garden round it where we can grow things for our family to eat. Hitler and Nazi-Fascism are against this. In Hungary Hitler wanted great and efficient wheat-producing estates. If you credit us with the minimum animal intelligence of not wanting to starve, then you can see that we are natural and bitter enemies of Nazi-Fascism.

This is a curious world of ours. Now we must settle down and tell you how it came about that we—for four hundred years the enemies of the Germans (Habsburg-Germans) and the natural enemies of Hitler—appeared three years later in uniform on the Russian fields and fought for the hated Hitler and Horthy.

We are speaking now of the country of our lords in 1938. We say that the "people" were anti-German and also anti-Nazi. (Some of our leaders say that it is wrong to be anti-German and right to be anti-Nazi. It is essentially a "Nazi" idea, they say, to believe that a whole people are bad or good and that a people can be held responsible for the sins of their rulers.) Anyhow,

right or wrong, the people were both anti-Nazi and anti-German, which you can understand after reading our history.

"The people" is a rather ambiguous term in any language. First we must state what we do *not* mean by "the people". The number of lower-class State employees, railway workers, municipal servants, post and telegraph workers, office servants in ministries, public offices, banks, etc., is about one million (including their families). They are not "the people". They get a small fixed salary and they look forward to their State pensions. They are staunch supporters of the régime. They belong to the State in just the same way as the regular N.C.O.s, police and gendarmerie, professional army officers and middle-class Civil Servants. This second group, with their families and dependants, represent nearly another million. Well, these two million are not "the people"; they are blindly loyal to the régime, they read the government press and support the government. Of the six hundred thousand Germans living in Hungary in 1938, more than a third are included in this group. Most of the other four hundred thousand Germans are natural allies of this mass of two million reactionary, right-wing, anti-Semitic and pension-loving group. The Hungarian Nazis recruited their followers from this group.

When we speak of "the people", we mean the industrial and land-workers, the estate servants, the dwarf-holders who must hire themselves out, the small and independent artisans, the white-collar workers of finance, industry and commerce, and the professional classes. This group represents three-quarters of the Hungarian population. Naturally you find some pro-Nazis in this group, just as you find even Communists in the "reactionary group".

The power belonged in 1938, as it belongs now, to the "régime". As post-1920 Hungary is certainly not a parliamentary democracy, as there has never been a chance, and is even less now, to turn out a government by parliamentary vote, ultimate power seems to be in the hands of Horthy. But this is not quite true. Ultimate power rests with the "régime"—that is, with the not quite harmonious combine or alliance of the following groups: the great landowners and aristocrats led by Count Bethlen, the former White Terrorist officers, the General Staff, the government party, and lastly the great industrialists led by the Jewish Chorin and Kornfeld. Most of the leading members of the General Staff are the sons or grandsons of the Austro-Habsburg civil and military service men who ruled Hungary after 1849. These General Staff officers of German origin became more Nazi than the Germans.

Even in 1932 Gömbös-Gömbölini started to ape Hitler and

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Mussolini. Since that time we have heard every month about a new would-be leader of the Hungarian Nazi-Fascist "masses". As the government press informed the two million people in the pay of the government that Horthy and Bethlen were really the first Fascists in Europe, as most of the government party deputies seemed to be pro-Nazi, as the professional army seemed to belong to the Extreme Right, these masses started to join the various Hungarian Nazi movements, in order not to be too late in climbing on the band-wagon. The early self-styled Nazi leaders were the Habsburg Archduke Albrecht, various members of the Festetich, Széchenyi and Pálffy families, the half-Armenian General Staff Major Szálasi, three generals and various members of the Szeged White Terrorists. All these would-be leaders were ambitious, and every military and political event of the period made them bolder.

Then the Horthy–Bethlen set grew afraid that these extremists might take the power away from them, and promptly adopted *their political line*. At that time their internal slogan was "We must take the wind out of their sails". So when the Extreme Right groups and the various Arrow Cross and Nazi parties demanded anti-Jewish legislation, closer collaboration with the Axis and more determined anti-democratic policy, the Horthy–Bethlen set passed anti-Jewish laws, started closer collaboration with Hitler and grew increasingly Fascist. In Hungary the Arrow Cross groups represented the Nazis, and the Horthy set the Papen–Hindenburg–Huggenberg group, but the Hungarian Nazis had no chance of starting their "revolution", for the Hungarian Papen (Bethlen) and the Hungarian Hindenburg (Horthy) swiftly and effectively out-Nazied the Nazis.

Now watch closely the next trick of our lords. They had to defend themselves against their Extreme Right opposition—that is, against the dissatisfied members of their own régime. At the same time they did not want to give all the power to Hitler. As the General Staff was flirting with the Extreme Right and there was a danger that they might stage a *coup d'état*, the Horthy–Bethlen set suddenly gave more freedom to the legally democratic opposition, and paid lip-service to parliamentarianism, constitutionalism, historic traditions and national independence. The Extreme Right attacked all these ideas, and the "leftish" opposition defended them. So the "leftish" opposition kept the balance for the Horthy–Bethlen set.

At the same time our lords said to the Germans: "You want food, industrial products, communications and soldiers from Hungary. Very well, you can have them *if there is law and order*

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668 *in the country*. We can maintain order and give you everything you want if you allow us to keep up the pretence of parliamentarianism, a semi-free press, a little democratic propaganda and the existence of the 'leftish' opposition."

The Germans agreed. The Horthy–Bethlen set used its power to weaken the Extreme Right groups, which were constantly attacked by the democratic opposition. But this trick, and these tactics, helped the "left" to organise.

The liberal, democratic and social democratic left were conscious of their past mistakes. They had on their side a lot of intrigues, suicides, compromises, jealousies and muddles. During 1938 they thought that all was lost and the left would be wiped out. Then came the trick of the Horthy–Bethlen set. The left at first cautiously, later with determination, used the chance. Groups were organised to prepare for coalition. Various leftish centres of resistance were created under the camouflage of regional literary societies and cultural clubs. The writers became very active. In Hungarian politics the important things have been done chiefly by writers. The 1848 revolution was created, organised and led by the young and ardent poet Petõfi. When the great lords and their politicians betrayed the country by collaborating with the Habsburgs, the Turks, Metternich or Hitler, the writers became the politicians of Hungary. Now the various groups of writers and journalists representing the factory workers, land-workers, the people of Transylvania and the professional classes started to negotiate with each other to clear up differences and to present a common front to the outside world. Party politicians saw their chance, and climbed on the bandwagon of this new movement, which was sometimes called a democratic coalition, and sometimes the People's Front. University professors, newspaper owners and progressive counts joined in. This work was started in 1938. It took several years for the Horthy–Bethlen set to find out that they committed a mistake when they made these activities physically possible.

Let us recapitulate the situation in Hungary during the two years before the war. The régime has all the power, but some members and most of the masses of the régime are a bit more pro-Nazi than the government. So the government becomes outwardly more pro-Nazi, but permits the democratic opposition a little bit of freedom to keep the balance. But the pro-Nazi Extreme Right and the Arrow Cross can act and organise, while the democratic opposition can only vegetate. The leaders of the opposition are necessarily men of compromise, or *at least they have to pay lip-service to compromise*. In order to smuggle one single

668 642 democratic sentence into a speech or article, they must repeat a lot of Bethlenist and Horthyist phrases about Hungarian superiority over our neighbours, about thousand-year-old frontiers, about the horridness of internationalism. We do not accuse this or that democratic or Trade Union leader of bad faith. We simply say that, in the huge Potemkin village of camouflaged Fascism which was Hungary between the two wars, even the opposition was something of a Potemkin-village opposition: it unfortunately created the impression that it was a part of the show produced by our clever Count Bethlen.

So while the Extreme Right and the Arrow Cross could count on fanatical Jew-haters, office-seekers and ambitious would-be S.A. and S.S. leaders, while the government could rely upon safe Civil Servants, and while Hitler knew that our General Staff would be loyal to him whatever happened, we, the people, representing 75% of the population, were not fanatical followers of our so-called parliamentary representatives and leaders of the opposition. They smelt to us too much of the government, they had in their record too many tactical steps for the sake of compromise, to inspire fanaticism in us.

000 History frequently produces unjust situations. Many of these opposition politicians—we are quite sure—would have preferred to fight openly. But in the country of our lords this was impossible. So they thought that if they could not have a pure banner, at least they ought to have *some* banner. The chief thing was to have some sort of banner of progressive thought, liberalism or social democracy flying. *But tiny and somewhat soiled banners do not inspire men to great deeds.*

It is probably true that it was infinitely better to have some Trade Unions than no Trade Unions at all. It was better that some liberal ideas should be voiced. It is also probably true that the existence of these parties and movements educated a lot of people and a lot of us. But it is equally true that banners should be clean, that we trusted those young men who went to prison for their books, speeches and articles, who were tortured because of their secret organisations, whose periodicals were banned, who chose prison or exile instead of compromise.

Our real leaders, our friends and advisers, had a hard time getting in touch with us and organising us. Our organisations in 1939 were tiny compared to the huge police state of our lords, which had the backing of Hitler's Germany in case we revolted.

We talked of revolt a lot. Please imagine the small flat of one of "our writers". There are a number of us, young land-

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workers educated in one of our clandestine seminaries, a couple of factory workers who want action, a young girl who "plants" our leaflets with the help of her expensive sports-car, a middle-aged scientist (one of our advisers) and similar people.

We are a realistic lot, those of us in the flat. Many of us have already spent more than one night at the political police station or gendarmerie—nights which we call our baptism. After you have had your face slapped by fat-necked bullies you get so mad that later, when they start the torture, you would not even tell them what time it is. And once you have started to be angry you keep on being angry—and not only now, because 2,242 people have more land than four million, or because our lords and their bootlickers "use" land-worker girls. Now it is not feudalism. Now it is also a personal thing.

Since most of us have been baptised, we know what we are up against. We are conspirators. And good conspirators should not be caught. So we are realists.

Here we are, early in 1939 in Hitler's Europe. What can *we* do? Can we plan a *coup d'état* to take over power? No. Even if we could find a sufficient number of conspirators in the government, such a new anti-Nazi government could not live, because the General Staff has the army, and the army would turn against us. So would most of the "reactionary group" of two million who have simple loyalty and were taught by Horthy and Bethlen that a good Hungarian patriot is a Fascist and dislikes democracy and Western ideas.

A *coup d'état* is ruled out.

Can we start a revolution?

One of our advisers speaks:

"Revolutions cannot be planned for a certain specified time. Lenin certainly had most to do with the Russian revolution, but he did not know when it would break out. And we are not in 1917, at the end of a lost war. Hitler and his allies have had six-years of political victories. Hitler and Horthy have dive-bombers and armoured cars. We have four million under-nourished, bewildered, ragged people."

But we ought to do *something*.

"This is exactly what we *can* do. Something. In a year or two a huge war is coming. Maybe it will be partly a people's war. We can prepare for that. We cannot openly attack dive-bombers and armoured cars. But we can organise. We can distribute leaflets. We can sabotage. We can go out and get more hand-picked men. We must get several hundred organisers. We must go slowly. We want quality, not quantity, to start with. We want

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fitness, deep moral conviction, courage and discipline in the men who are to choose others."

000 If there is a catastrophe, we cannot stop it. If our "betters" push us into another war, we cannot stop that either. But we can go on preparing for the day when we really can *do* more than something.

We sit there in the small flat in Budapest, in 1939, and start to talk business. Who is "good" and who is "bad". What our next leaflet campaign is to be. Whether we know any more printers who might be prepared to risk their necks. Whether we know a woman who could educate some land-girls, to carry on the work of organising in case of mobilisation. How we can keep in touch with each other.

CHAPTER XIV

THE 3rd of September 1939—our lords say Hungary will be able to stay out of the war if we give Hitler some food and some concessions.

Autumn 1940, after the fall of France—our lords say we may be able to gain a lot if we give Hitler all help *short of war*. After all, Hitler gave back to Hungary part of the northern and eastern territories which were taken away after the last war. The second anti-Jewish law is passed, many people are interned and Svabian Gömbösists and their friends take over the rich jobs which the Jews were forced to relinquish. Our newspapers write about the alliance "of the two young proletarian nations, the Germans and the Russians". Our lords are not at present anti-Russian, but Communists at home are still sentenced to prison. The General Staff and the professional army officers are impatient. They want war. They know that Hitler is going to win very soon. The government newspapers report that London has been bombed out of existence. They—just like the German press—think that the bombing of cities is a glorious thing. Meanwhile everybody belonging to the ruling set makes a lot of profit; they have peace and they think they are very clever. "The people"—we, the powerless seventy-five per cent—are sad and worried. The White Terror-Arrow Cross people are unbearably victorious since the fall of Paris. They promise us executions and more concentration camps. There is only one small event that gives us any hope: the government concludes a treaty of eternal peace with our southern neighbour, Yugoslavia.

This is a very good thing. We like people in general. But the Yugoslavs are particularly nice. They are a tough, straightforward lot. They dislike Hitler, and they like the same kind of amusements and food as we like. Maybe our lords are really clever. Maybe we really shall stay out of the war. Maybe we really shan't have to fight for Hitler.

The 4th of April 1941—the Prime Minister, Count Paul Teleki, blew out his brains during the night. *Why*? Huge German lorries are rolling through Budapest. They are advancing against Yugoslavia. Budapest is bewildered. People in the trams and buses weep. Silent crowds stand watching on the Buda side of the Danube embankment, where the German divisions pass through towards the south.

What will happen now? The government made a treaty of eternal friendship with Yugoslavia only a few months ago. Can the government let the Germans attack them from Hungary? It seems as if this is what will happen. Count Teleki, who was one of the Szeged counter-revolutionaries, but who seemed to be a decent chap in this particular matter, did not want it to happen. But his suicide is a very weak protest. What will Count Bethlen and the other lords advise Horthy? Will the Hungary of our lords be a party to this outrage? Shall we once again be at war with the whole world, fighting this time for the mass-murderer Hitler?

Things look very bad. Many of our friends disappear. Some escape from the country, some are shot, some are interned. The new Premier, Bárdossy, is pro-Nazi. Belgrade is bombed from Hungarian and Rumanian airfields. What price shall we have to pay for this?

Our lords have done it. Horthy declared war on Yugoslavia. If the world calls Hungary Hitler's jackal it will be justified. Who will tell the world that we—the people—had nothing to do with this?

. . . The day Hitler attacked Russia our lords were in a great state of excitement. They had had two grievances against Hitler. One was "that this blasted corporal takes away the prestige of anti-Semitism". The second, his pact with the Soviet. But now it seemed that, after all, he was behaving like a gentleman and turning against the Reds.

In the ministries our lords told each other that the campaign would be over in six weeks. Hitler would be in Moscow within four weeks. The Bolshevik rabble could not organise. The Russian people hated their rulers. Hitler's divisions would just walk through to Vladivostok.

Most of our lords and all the generals were impatient with the

government for not declaring war against Russia at once. The General Staff officers went round explaining that Hungary must take part in this easy and triumphant campaign. They said that it would be a comparatively cheap campaign. "We should have to risk perhaps a hundred thousand men."

(60) But we—the men who had to be risked in this cheap campaign —did not want war. We had had enough of the wars of our lords. We knew the Russians from the last war. Many of them, prisoners of war, had lived in our midst for years. They were cheerful, likeable, hard-working fellows. We did not want to march to Moscow. We wanted food and a better life.

Our lords were worried. They did not know how to get us into this war of theirs. Their newspapers, which for two years had been very friendly to Russia, naturally started to scream about Bolshevik bestiality and the great Christian crusade of Hitler. But the political police reported that we were in no mood for war. So our lords thought of a trick, as they always do: *They arranged the bombardment of Kassa, one of our nicest cities.* When it turned out that the Russians were not even near to Kassa and that German bombers based in Slovakia did the bombing, when a railway worker gave away the secret that they had brought some Russian bomb-splinters from the Eastern front to exhibit them in Kassa, it was already too late. War was declared, the reactionary two million were enthusiastic, and we were mobilised. Some leaflets protested against the war, some people were shot, some companies were decimated, but it did not help. The gendarmes came, you had to put on uniform, and this dangerous democratic-revolutionary scum, the despised land and factory workers of Hungary, was shipped to the east to fight for Hitler and Horthy.

Isn't it a curious world?

Our lords had promised to keep us out of war. Now they hoped that they would be able to keep *themselves* out of the war by giving a few divisions to Hitler. But their press, the lower stratum of the régime, started an orgy of jingoism. Wasn't it an Englishman who said that "patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel"? Well, the scoundrels were at large. They started a campaign against everything humane and decent. They were triumphant at being able to disinfect Hungarian public life, the press, literature and the theatre of almost all cultural values.

The "military" got the upper hand in the country. The "military" were the generals of German origin who now bragged in their German mother tongue, and the Gömbösist White Terrorists among the professional army officers. Every day the

press published lists of workers who had been imprisoned for "agitation against the existing form of government", for "conducting anti-State" propaganda and for "insulting the nation". If you said that people were starving on the huge estates, you were insulting the nation. If you said that Hitler was Hungary's enemy, then that was "anti-State" propaganda.

Over our heads the middle and upper classes had a free-for-all fight. The Gömbösists formed the "new Christian middle classes". By this they meant that they all wanted to become as rich as the Jewish bank directors, factory-owners and merchants. But there were only about fifty thousand very rich Jews, while there were two hundred thousand ambitious young Christian gentlemen—that is, Gömbösist thugs. They quarrelled with each other, and with the Civil Servants, who were envious of the successful new "Christian" bank directors and business-men. The Arrow Cross were impatient. They wanted the government for themselves, so they quarrelled with the government and with each other for not being able to solve the question of satisfying thousands of would-be Cabinet Ministers. And the officially-directed press went on with the nauseating lip service to "the splendid unity of the valiant fighters against Communism".

Meanwhile we died on the Russian front.

By October 1941 Hungary was again transformed. To the outside world it presented the curious picture of a Hitlerite country where a few withered little democratic institutions still existed. In *reality* nothing had changed. Our lords went on ruling, but now most of their camouflage took Nazi–Fascist forms. The feudalism ruled mostly through Hitlerite tools, as it had ruled previously through democratic forms.

Severe anti-Jewish laws were introduced and the government-owned and gentlemen-edited newspapers wrote in filthy language about the Jews. Some of the Hungarian laws outdid even those of Nuremberg. Intercourse between Jews and Aryans was rigorously punished. Tens of thousands of poor Jews were kicked out of their jobs, and most of them were herded into labour battalions. *But* the big Jews retained their positions, some of them quite openly, some camouflaged by the aristocrats. Financial and industrial companies were filled with "per cent camouflagers", since the companies were forbidden to have more than 6% of Jewish employees. What happened? The companies took on three or four Counts and Barons as directors with high salaries, and a lot of young Gömbösists. All the Jewish directors, vice-presidents and presidents stayed on. The upper-class Jews did not have to go into labour battalions, and they kept their non-

Jewish mistresses. The Jewish labour battalions did public works badly, while we were unemployed. Jewish physicians, lawyers, journalists, scientists and merchants built the roads, and our bellies were empty. Our lords proved to us that the small Jews were their enemies. So we liked them.

There was some protest against all this.

On all sides a movement began of unorganised persons who wrote disgusted articles and made disgusted speeches about the situation. Only people of high prestige, of course, got away with such expressions of disgust. Among those who protested were Christian leaders, famous writers and scientists.

We were even more hungry than before. In Budapest the rich lived in a fool's paradise, buying meat, chicken and other luxuries at enormous prices on the black market. They were content because *their* Hungary stayed neutral and *their* life was peaceful. One of the liberal writers, Sándor Márai, wrote at this time in *Pesti Hirlap*:

> "This fine neutral life is the life of about two hundred thousand people in this country of fourteen millions. Those two hundred thousand see only the glamour of the Váczi utca and of the expensive restaurants. The millions outside who must queue up for horse-meat find it extremely difficult to get the money even for that. . . . Life in Hungary is no better than it is in any other part of this war-ridden Europe, and I hate those Hungarians who try to impress the outside world with this so-called peaceful splendour. They are not only liars; they are also traitors to this poor and suffering country."

Wheat and other food-stuffs were stored by the government to await transportation to Germany. In October 1941 fires started to break out in the north and south and east and west. All over the Hungarian countryside these German stores caught fire. Newspapers reported the arrest of workers. But the German stores kept on burning—sometimes 1,000,000 *pengoes*' worth a week.

The big estates had contracts to produce wheat for Hitler. Every autumn there are floods in Hungary. Dykes and dams were cut. In the month of October alone twenty-nine land-workers were sentenced for cutting dykes and dams.

We did not stay neutral.

The government newspapers reported the confiscation of certain leaflets. Foolishly enough, they also reported the titles of these leaflets: "Hungarians, this is not your war", or "Wheat for Hitler is defeat for you", or "Workers at desks, in factories and on the land . . ."

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In the workers' and land-workers' clubs we listened to the radio. New voices could be heard on the air. We recognised the voices. They talked our language, and not the sanctimonious, theatrical language of the official radio. They told us the truth about the war and about our lords. Our nameless friends who operated these secret stations had very poor equipment. It was very difficult to hear them. Some nights they faded out entirely. But the government newspapers and radios attacked them furiously. We felt that we were not alone.

While our lords—our educated, travelled, clever lords—were sure of Hitler's victory, we knew all along that he was doomed. It was so simple to be sure of it. You only had to look at the map and think a bit. We knew that soon three-quarters of humanity would be fighting the Nazi–Fascists. We knew that they hadn't a chance. We knew it so well that we grew daring. In October 1941 one of our leaders, a young land-worker called Imre Kovács, wrote an article in the conservative–liberal *Magyar Nemzet* under the title: "Call to Arms".

He called to arms all the workers in the factories and on the land, he summoned them to organise and prepare for the building of the future democratic Hungary. He gave the conditions under which we would allow intellectuals and progressive members of the upper classes to join us.

This was a very big thing for us. The fact that the conservative–liberal *Magyar Nemzet*, owned by the rich Baron Kornfeld, published Kovács' article proved to us that these rich lords wanted to join *us*, wanted to be good to *us*.

Conservative aristocrats saw the danger and tried to get the support of the landed peasants by organising a bogus peasant movement. They formed, for instance, an association of "élite peasants", who were decorated with the emblems of "golden wheat" and "silver wheat". They thought themselves—these ambitious young aristocrats like the good Count Dózsewffy—clever in joining forces with the landed peasants against the seven million combined land- and factory-workers. The big peasants naturally accepted the invitations, drank the wine of the counts, accepted their gifts and went home to their sleepy-safe existence.

Christmas 1941 saw an interesting demonstration. Liberal scientists and conservative agrarians wrote articles in the Christmas number of the social democratic *Népszava* (People's Voice). Only people who know the country of our lords well can see what a big thing this was. During Bethlen's rule not even a university student—let alone a professor—could have written for the "dirty

socdems". Our lords grew worried, but did nothing, because they were afraid of the Extreme Right too.

In the spring of 1942 British and American radios were saying that we would soon revolt because we could not live on our bread ration. We smiled, knowing that never, not even during the consolidated Bethlen régime, had the land-workers been able to eat as much bread as our war-time ration permitted us to eat, *had we the money to buy it*. People wrote books and made successful films about "underground Europe". This was a good thing, because it was excellent propaganda for us. But we still *were* underground. About this time some people tried to blow up the Gyoer ammunition factory, which produced arms for Hitler. High explosives were put underneath the factory and, according to the reports in our newspapers, it was to have been blown up one Sunday night when there were no workers present. Somebody betrayed the plan (we know his name and will remember him), and people were hanged as a punishment. The leader of the saboteurs was a man called **Nádas**. The newspapers said nasty things about him. He is one of our heroes. Even those of us who did not have anything to do with his work are all proud of him.

Nádas was hanged on a cold dawn in April 1942. He stood there alone. He did not listen to the man who wanted to comfort him in the name of religion, because this man and his colleagues blessed the Hitler–Horthy flags, and never ceased trying to make us believe that their God is always with both sides in a war. We have different ideas about God and about the man of Nazareth whose principles have never yet been realised.

There was Nádas. Alone with death. We know that he did not mind dying. He was a soldier without uniform. (Did you ever think how much harder it is to fight without a uniform?) He knew that he had not even been very successful. He had not hurt the Nazi-Fascists much. He knew also that he could have lived quietly. But he wanted to fight. So he died peacefully, and made us even more determined.

Our lords think that sabotage is a horrible weapon. True, it is hard to imagine a couple of counts going out at night and blowing up a bridge. But in the period of dive-bombers and armoured cars sabotage is the only weapon of unarmed people. Such honest, quiet and law-abiding peoples as the Dutch, Norwegians and Danes learnt this too.

Spring 1942—A war winter had passed. The previous October Hitler had declared once and for all that he had crushed the Russian armed might and destroyed the Russian air force. The non-existent Russian armies nevertheless caused him losses, and

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he did not take Moscow or Leningrad. Some of our lords grew apprehensive. We sabotaged as much as we could. Leaflets appeared. The United States was at war with us, the Hitler officers were arrogant, the prospects of our lords were doubtful, to say the least.

So they began to waver. There was one fight for political power going on between the Horthy–Bethlen–Kállay régime and the Extreme Right, and another fight for "the people" between the "People's Front" and our lords. Yes, our lords grew definitely interested in the people. Kállay, the new Premier, said in his inauguration address that "after this war Hungarian serfs must be liberated".

The leadership of the Extreme Right and the Arrow Cross was taken over by the former Premier, Heinrich Imrédy, from Major Szálasi, whose insanity became evident even in the strictest possible medical sense of the word. His startlingly funny speeches, orders and declarations were the laughing-stock of the whole country. Imrédy became the Nazi-leader after a long series of internal quarrels, scandals and ruptures within the various pro-Nazi movements. There were scandalous and ridiculous accusations and counter-accusations within the Nazi ranks. The courts found more than five hundred Nazis guilty of assaults, bomb outrages, treason and embezzlement. The rest of the "shock-troops" of the Hungarian Nazis were interned, and the small Civil Servants, office servants, retired gendarmes, pensioned railway and postal workers read too much about the embezzlements going on in their parties to continue paying the membership fees.

The Imrédy–Nazi group was a General Staff without an army. But Imrédy and the handful of generals and aristocrats around him knew—or thought they knew—that, having connections and a biggish parliamentary group, they could persuade the Germans that they could give them more soldiers and food than the Horthy–Bethlen–Kállay set.

While the pro-Horthy and Imrédy lords fought one another for political power, they were at one in attacking us. In March 1942 Premier Kállay turned on the liberal and social democratic leaders for not co-operating in the national war effort and for disloyally questioning the wisdom of the pro-Axis government policy. At the same time Imrédy demanded that the government should at once deal with the centres of "anti-German, pro-democratic resistance", mentioning clubs, circles, literary movements, newspapers and "groups of questionable character".

But all this was in vain, because the "tactical" step which our lords took when they gave the "left" some little possibility of

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existing started to produce results. Nine daily newspapers demonstrated their anti-Hitler, pro-democrat beliefs. Torch-singers in night clubs, university professors, actors, writers and lecturers carried on more or less open anti-Hitler propaganda, and on March 15th, the anniversary of the 1848 anti-Habsburg (anti-German) revolution, there was a country-wide anti-Axis demonstration. The slogan was "Petõfi-1848". People wore badges with Petõfi's profile and tne date 1848. Naturally every Hungarian child knows that Petõfi stands for everything which the pro-Nazi Horthy régime hates and wants to destroy.

Newspapers wrote more and more on historical subjects. If they could not openly write nasty things about Hitler and Horthy, they had their say against Prince Metternich and the Habsburgs, and described how our lords were the boot-lickers of Prince Metternich in the last century.

In every speech during this period Kállay promised that he would deal most severely with the saboteurs, organisers of whispering propaganda and those who weakened "national morale".

Autumn 1942—The Ministry of Propaganda organised a special department "to explain the war". Soldiers were asked not to write defeatist letters home, and families were told not to weaken the morale of the troops by letters full of complaints. "Letters sent home and soldiers on leave or wounded should not bring back defeatism and depression from the front", wrote the *Tábori Ujsdg*, a paper printed for the troops. "Soldiers should not spread scare or panic. This is against the military oath and weakens the home front."

The new department was not very effective, because to some battalions about to leave for the front the war had to be "explained" by executing every tenth man.

Árpád Szakasits, General Secretary of the Social Democratic party, and Imre Kovács, the land-worker leader, had the war explained to them in the special prison of the Military Court, while thousands of us were imprisoned and interned. Our lords now wanted to do everything they could to dissociate themselves from Nazi bestiality, but the fact is that their White Terrorist thugs, during Bethlen's rule in peace and during the Horthy–Kállay rule in war, tortured people so cruelly that we dare give you only one example. The political prisoners were beaten up every day. Some of them were still walking on their knees and elbows three months after the questioning, because their hands and feet had been beaten to pulp. Szakasits and Kovács were also beaten up, but not too much, because even the thugs had some

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doubts about Hitler's victory, and feared revenge. They were set free after a time, but it seems that the war was not sufficiently explained to them, because they went on working in the same way as before.

The Social Democrat leaders grew more daring. To anyone who does not forget that Hungary was in Hitler's Europe it seems almost incredible that this party was still in existence. At the Party Congress it was declared "that the Party and organised labour as a whole refuses any compromise and would not tolerate it. *Its faith in democratic ways of life and in democratic methods is as firm as ever.* The party will not yield to any threat or temptation."

The mood of the land-workers was similar. Through the officially sponsored Peasant Association the government tried to develop "peasant unity"—so that they might have a hold on the peasants and land-workers. The official leader of the Association, Ferenc Nagy, M.P., made a speech almost every week telling us that "the difference between the landless labourers and smallholders must disappear, for there is danger of an approaching storm which must be met by united peasantry".

This did not appeal to the four million landless land-workers and estate servants, who knew very well that this "dangerous storm" was the anticipated post-war revolution, against which the régime was trying to defend itself. Land-workers wrote letters to newspaper editors stating that it was no good saying that there were no differences between peasants and land-workers. The differences were great.

The best point about this Peasant Association was that land-worker leaders, like Imre Kovács, Joseph Darvas and Peter Veres (who are themselves land-workers, and not leaders from above), took part in the meetings and spoke openly to us. They did not bother to repeat the empty official slogans of the Association. They spoke about real things. The Association gave them the opportunity of speaking to us without the interference of the gendarmerie, *which they had never been able to do during the previous twenty years.*

In one of his speeches President Nagy blamed the peasants for the insufficient quality and quantity of pigs raised. János Hegyesi, a peasant, wrote in the land-workers' weekly *Szabad Szó* (Free Voice) in July 1942:

"Do all these gentlemen really believe that the reason for the shortage of fat is due to the fact that the village people refuse to raise pigs? Let me tell you, my dear pig-raising gentlemen, that there are scores of reasons for this, the main one being that there is not enough fodder. . . . Be careful about grumbling,

000 because the people in the villages might be quick to answer: God save us from those who try to take care of us."

You see, even the peasants dared to attack their President.

Our mood at this time is perhaps best illustrated by a quotation. The writer is Peter Veres, a land-worker who wrote many books and remained a land-worker, living in his village, and who was tortured innumerable times by the gendarmerie during Count Bethlen's rule. Veres wrote in the land-worker weekly about the toiling masses of Egypt, Peru and Mexico, and then went on:

> "I have written all this to warn the toiling workers and peasants who are living in misery that they are not the first to work wretchedly for their meagre daily bread. And I warn them that *the fate of toilers is a thing which concerns first of all ourselves*. There may be others—writers, poets, priests and other sympathisers—who may feel sorry for us, but it is only we, the workers, who can change our lot. Every worker must realise this, must be conscious of it and unite with those who have a similar fate. The freedom and better life of the future depend on the question whether he can voluntarily co-operate in disciplined action with his fellow-workers in the manner adopted by those workers who built the pyramids. If those hundreds of thousands of workers could build mountains or cut canals at a single senseless command from above, cannot we do smaller jobs for the benefit of our children and ourselves? We must try. This is the path toward liberation. *Freedom of co-operation or forced unity?* We must choose between the two. The first is the way of the free spirit, the second that of the body under a yoke. The way of the free spirit should be ours."

Yes, such articles appeared in Hitler's Europe towards the end of 1942. Kovács, Veres, and a few others were more daring than the rest. For them it was more dangerous to write anti-Nazi articles than for big lords. But they wrote and made speeches. The social democratic movement became active again.

The banners became cleaner again.

Why?

We were in a dangerous mood. The government knew well that if they dissolved the Social Democratic party and the Trade Unions, if they tried to destroy the land-workers' movement, all the socialists and land-workers would go underground and be even more dangerous. They were also worried lest we should turn Communist. They knew that the Party leadership could not continue their compromises because we would not let them.

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o they doubled the police, organised huge anti-revolutionary 00C
ara-military bands, let our movements exist and explained to
erlin that this was the only way to avoid civil war in Hungary.
n a way this was also a clever move. Some people became very
rave *on paper*. They wrote surprisingly courageous attacks
gainst Fascism. Others read the articles and liked them. The
nd-workers' movement and the Social Democratic party grew
n numbers. There was a mood of victory on the left. Some of us
nought that this was dangerous because the "liberty-period"
hich had somehow just started in the centre of Hitler's Europe
as too good to be true. It was started as a trick or tactical step
y our lords. They had to get Nazi-German consent to it. From
ne middle of 1942 and all through 1943 the progressive, anti-
scist, democratic sentiment of the majority was expressed almost
eely, certainly much more openly than during the democratic
ethlen period. At the same time Hungarian divisions fought for
litler and a hundred thousand of us perished in the East.

Can you understand that some of us were deeply worried?

It was certainly a good thing that liberals, socialists and
grarians could organise a strong democratic, progressive or
ocialist public opinion, while in every other country of Europe
or many years only stupidity, bestiality and Nazi-Fascism were
t work in public life. It was a good thing that one could
ead translations of new English and Russian books, and know
romptly and in detail about the Beveridge Plan, about the
pirit of equality of sacrifice in war-time England; it was a
ood thing that such books as *This Above All* and *The Moon is
Down* could be read by us, and that *our* newspapers could pub-
sh long extracts from Ambassador Davies' *Mission to Moscow*
nd Wendell Willkie's *One World*. Compared to the stuff all the
ther occupied and satellite countries read, this was great good
uck for Hungary. It was a good thing that many newspapers
ent on intelligently analysing the social problems and tasks of
uture Hungary—taking the defeat of Nazi-Fascism for granted.

BUT A HUNDRED THOUSAND OF US HAD ALREADY DIED ON THE
USSIAN FRONT FOR HITLER, FIGHTING AGAINST OUR IDEALS.

BUT MOST OF OUR AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY WENT ON PRODUC-
NG FOR HITLER.

BUT POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE TORTURED IN THE MANY PRISONS.

BUT OUR PRO-NAZI GENERAL STAFF HAD MANY THOUSANDS OF
UGOSLAVS, TAKEN BY OUR LORDS FROM YUGOSLAVIA, MASSACRED
N THE DISTRICT OF NOVI SAD.

Yes, our lords permitted us to demonstrate against Hitler.
Yes, in a way it was a political defeat for Hitler that he was

OOO forced to give us such liberties, which he had certainly stamped out in all the other countries under his domain. He had to do this because otherwise half Europe—from Poland to Greece, from Austria to Bulgaria—might have been turned into guerilla or partisan territory.

But we wanted to see the military defeat of Hitler as soon as possible, and we did not like our situation.

Yes, certainly it was a fine thing that the Social Democratic Party almost doubled its membership. But after the war, when judgement comes, will a hundred thousand living socialists counterbalance a hundred thousand dead Yugoslavs?

This was the external danger, as we saw it. There was an internal danger too, in this curious "liberty period" of ours. No doubt it was a risky business in Axis-Europe to be a true Christian, a liberal, a socialist or a Jew. But in Hungary it was less dangerous than elsewhere. True, socialists who tried to act illegally went to prison and were tortured. All action was illegal anyway. True, the land-workers' leaders were persecuted every time it was found out that they had *acted*. But everybody in Hungary who had any connection with one of the nine anti-Nazi newspapers or with one of the many periodicals could write brave anti-Nazi articles. Such articles did a lot of good to all of us by keeping the banners flying. They were good for the authors too, who provided themselves with proof for the future: "Look, during Hitler's rule I risked my neck by writing against him!"

We—the people—did not like the way in which our lords made these things legal. It seemed fishy if you could do things openly in the country of our lords. Who knew? One day they might stop all this, and then they would know a great deal about us. They would know the names of all the socialists, because the Party was recruiting members legally. What would happen—we said to each other—when Hitler was threatened by his enemies from the east or south? Then he would be forced to occupy Hungary completely, then he would stop this curious liberty period and create a one hundred per cent pro-Nazi régime, possibly under Imrédy or some other Quisling. These Quislings were only waiting for their chance to take their revenge, and they would certainly kill and torture all the known enemies of Nazi Fascism. *Then* this big legality, this government-permitted democracy in a country at war with democracy, would make the work of the Gestapo easier.

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CHAPTER XV

How did we *live* during this period?

Three hundred thousand of us were mobilised. A hundred thousand of us just died on the Russian front. Two million of us went barefoot all through the winter of 1942–43. *A pair of shoes on the black market cost more than the earnings of a land-worker's family of five for a whole year.* In the night clubs of Budapest the counts paid 100 *pengoes* for a packet of smuggled American cigarettes—that is, five pre-war pounds sterling. We still earned twopence a day on the estates of the same counts. And we were asked by our lords to defend this kind of existence!

The gendarmes came for more young men. They were put into worn uniforms, given rifles and told that they would be doing "police duty" in the rear of the German armies. It was winter, and thousands of us lost our feet—the Russian winter bit them off. We had typhus. The Under-Secretary for Health announced that "only" fifteen thousand of us died of typhus.

The gendarmes came for older men too.

In the East we were doing "police duty" with light infantry equipment. And suddenly we had to fight Russian armour. The front broke. The well-armed S.S. troops flung us off our lorries; they even took over our hospital trains, and, throwing out our wounded, loaded the trucks and steamed off. *Then* it was no good telling us that only the leadership was responsible.

Out there we learnt that the Jews are "*us*", too. We camped near the Jewish labour battalions. There they were in their summer clothing. Our lords did not give them winter equipment, and forbade their families to send them warm clothes. They talked Hungarian. They sang our songs. And they were humiliated even more than our lords had humiliated us.

We at least had a rifle in our hands. They were unarmed. The frost killed them in their thousands. Sometimes they were not fed for days. When the Russian advance came, many thousands of them were left to die without fuel or food. Some of them the Russians found still alive. They gave them food and clothing, and after a few days sent them back to our lines. The S.S. came and stripped them. It is said that more than sixty thousand of them perished.

Yes, we found out about the Jews. That Russian winter convinced us, if we were not already convinced, that the Jewish question is a trick of our lords. It is a trick of the system. The Jews were helpless like us. Would any sane person accuse those

000 sixty thousand Hungarian Jews of wanting to die for Hitler? But die they did.

"In this war the whole Hungarian people is fighting enthusiastically for Christianity and European culture," wrote Paul Tzvatko, editor-in-chief of the government-owned *Magyarország*.

The gendarmes came for young lads of sixteen, and for women too.

Doing serf-labour was now called "home front service". The huge estates were worked now by even cheaper labour, because the home defence army was paid with the taxpayer's money.

The gendarmes came for volunteers to work in German factories.

"Nobody thinks now of material gain, when work means home defence and valiant battle for Christian culture", wrote István Milotay, editor-in-chief of another government-owned newspaper.

The gendarmes came and took away small-holders from their own little piece of land to work on some far-away estate.

All the factories—beer factories and soda factories, toilet-article factories and silk factories—were declared to be engaged on "war industry", which meant that a general became the commandant of the factory. There were a few colonels and majors thrown in into the bargain. If you did not like your wage and said so, you were court-martialled. If you did not want to work overtime, you were thrown into prison. Prices were doubled and trebled. Our wages rose some 40%. Prices were again doubled, and we got a new rise of 6%.

Our women-folk stood in long queues, sometimes all night. A skilled factory worker was paid at most 8 *pengoes* a day. And in a restaurant you could not get a single meal for that price.

"The Hungarian people are united behind their wise leadership", wrote George Ottlik, editor-in-chief of the government-owned *Pester Lloyd*.

Summer 1943—The Minister of Propaganda still went on explaining the war, the government-owned newspapers still glorified "the enthusiasm of the valiant fighters for European culture"—that is, us.

But our lords knew well by now that Hitler's war was lost. The Russians and the men of the Eighth Army convinced them.

Budapest radio, in English, pointed out that Hungary was really neutral. And this was true to a certain extent. The Hungary of our lords was certainly neutral. They sent our food to the west, they sent us to the east and they stayed in glamorous Budapest leading their neutral life. They ate neutral dinners consisting of Rhine wines, Yugoslav oysters, Hungarian beef. They drank whisky and smoked American cigarettes bought from smugglers at enormous prices. They had their immaculate suits

made of English cloth, paying 2500 *pengoes* for one suit. We proved our anti-British sentiment by not buying such suits, which would, after all, have cost us only five years' pay.

Yes, our lords realised that the war was lost. Most of the members of the Kállay government proved this by their increasingly aloof attitude to the war in their speeches. The General Staff still believed in a Hitler victory, but this was natural, as these good generals knew very well that Hitler's defeat would be their own funeral (without military honours).

Now the Horthy–Bethlen–Kállay set were very glad that some years before they had taken their tactical step of allowing the "left" some freedom. They tried to back out of the anti-Jewish laws as far as possible.

Our newspapers published curious denials. They denied that the government had sent out reassurance agents to neutral capitals. They denied that Horthy and Bethlen and Kállay were trying to get into touch with the western Allies. We knew very well what all this meant. Count Bethlen had taught us how to read our newspapers. If I am in good health, I do not need to inform the newspapers that "I am not fatally ill".

Kállay adjourned Parliament for an indefinite period. We knew why. He was having a hard time in Parliament trying to please the ears of both the Germans and the Allies. He had to please the Germans if he did not want German occupation. He wanted to please the Allies so that after their victory they would let him rule us.

There was a victory mood among the two hundred thousand of Budapest. They had avoided the war personally for three and a half years. Now they felt that the clever diplomacy of Bethlen and Kállay would save them for the rest of the war, and even for the peace too. Conservative newspapers explained in "serious" articles that Hungary had never really been at war with Great Britain and America, but that she had to defend Europe against "Bolshevik barbarity". This the Anglo-Saxons must surely "understand". Anyhow, it was in the interests of the Western Allies that Christian culture and "creative property" should rule in the Danube Basin. You see, the "white count's burden" again.

In the clubs of the aristocracy and gentry our lords persuaded each other that "Churchill and Roosevelt would never let Stalin bomb Budapest".

Our counts started to travel a lot. Their "failing health" sent them to Switzerland and Sweden. Knowing them a bit, we can well imagine them as they met some English lord who had hunted with them in pre-war days. You know the sort of thing:

"Lord X stayed with Count Y in his lovely country house at Z . . ., and what could be more natural than that he should try to help to get Hungary out of the mess those naughty Germans pushed her into? Dear, dear, it makes you weep. Those horrid Germans . . ."

And our lords came home and they said it would be all right. With a bit of clever diplomacy, by playing the big Allies against each other, the régime would go on. They did not remember that in 1917 they persuaded each other that "the British could never permit the Habsburg Empire to perish".

The spectacle which followed during the second half of 1943 would have been funny if it had not been so tragic for us. The antics our lords played!

Do you know how they make us dance when one of our revolutions fails? They take a pistol and start to shoot at the ground on which we are standing. They make us jump. Bullets come from all sides, and we move our feet mighty quick. The behaviour of our lords during this period reminded us of this dance.

But for once *they* did the dancing, and history did the shooting. Bullets came from every side. The Nazi-Germans threatened the country with occupation. There were Bolsheviks in the east and Partisans in the south. And we in a revolutionary mood. There were the opposition politicians, who grew ever more daring. There were the Extreme Right-Wing politicians, who watched closely. There was the General Staff, which denounced the lords once a week to Hitler. There was the B.B.C. telling them what would happen to them after the war. There were the Jews, who hinted that they wanted their revenge. There was the Arrow Cross press, which quoted the old speeches of our lords when they bragged about being the first Fascists in Europe. There was the Allied landing in Italy, the mass bombing of Berlin and the Russian break-through. There were indiscreet reassurance agents and there was the Gestapo in every Ministry.

They danced on. And they had to sing too.

They sang to Hitler that they would fight with him till victory. They sang to the Allies that Hungary was really neutral and they—in the secret places of their hearts—completely pro-British, or pro-Polish, or pro-American, according to the nation to whom they were singing.

They were furiously active. They printed books in English proving that they had always been democratic, and sent them out to neutral capitals, and meanwhile they organised their huge "defensive force against internal enemies". All the former

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White Terrorists got good jobs preparing "to defend the nation" and the law and order of the nation".

The law and order of Hungary was a pro-Nazi argument in 1939–42. Now it became a pro-Allied argument. "The Western Allies need an island of law and order in the Danube Basin," wrote our lords. They forgot to mention that they needed a pretty big army to defend this law and order against "internal enemies".

Extreme Right-Wing deputies left their parties and joined the government party and began to make liberal speeches. They rushed round in great haste to find Jews to whom they could be good and helpful. Others rushed to former servants in the country to provide themselves with "safe lower class addresses" in case the auxiliary police should not be able to defend the nation against internal enemies.

Political life became intensive. The various Right-Wing parties and the government party started a series of re-groupings. New groups emerged. Some Nazis discovered that they were anti-German, but pro-Nazi. Others said that they were simply lovers of Hungarian independence. Some Extreme Right leaders tried to persuade the Horthy–Bethlen–Kállay régime that they were all in the same boat because the Allies would not see any difference between one hundred per cent and eighty per cent pro-Nazis.

Our lords organised secret societies and prepared "white" and "black" lists. They founded many "clandestine anti-Nazi clubs" and had a lovely game bargaining: "If you will put me on your 'white' list I will take your name off my 'black' list".

The royalists tried to persuade the country that they existed too. These harmless old gentlemen, who thought that Anglo-American bayonets would force us to accept Otto of Habsburg as king, had meetings and spoke of their "masses". As a matter of fact their masses were sadly disappearing. Royalism in Hungary is a question of age, and of the total of three hundred old aristocrats and gentry about a hundred and fifty joined their cloud cuckoo land.

Being "leftish" became very fashionable. About thirty thousand gentlemen joined the "middle-class section of the Small Farmer's Party", and the Social Democrats were forced by the government to form a Party alliance with this fake-party. In this way our lords tried to control the People's Front. This forced and faked alliance was called the People's Front, but it should not be mistaken for the real thing, a spontaneous movement which produced such demonstrations as Imre Kovács's "Call to Arms"

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CHAPTER XVI

DECEMBER 1943—the present. The King of Italy and his Marshal Badoglio signed a document by which Italy surrendered unconditionally. They made declarations to that effect. The following weeks and months seemed to show that the King of Italy was not "Italy", which is before everything else about 45,000,000 people. Badoglio wasn't "Italy" either. He was an old soldier with a very long record of fighting for various "Italies". Now he proposed to fight for the "King's new Italy". But the King's Italy had been for more than twenty years Mussolini's Italy. No wonder that the other Italy, the "People's Italy", was bewildered and passive while the "valiant fighters against Fascism" (the King and Badoglio) organised their activities against the Germans and Mussolini.

We watched carefully. We thought: "Mussolini's work must have been pretty effective. He has wrecked Italy's future as our lords wrecked ours." The Italian people, confused as they were, looked on apathetically while the Nazis destroyed bridges, railways, roads, buildings—everything. By doing so the Nazis made sure that a greater part of Italy should be a theatre of war for longer than would otherwise be the case. So the Italian people seemed to be acting against their own interests when they let the Nazi armies go on with their demolitions, in order to build a strong front against the Allies.

Why weren't their leaders all over Italy to go to the people and say: "Hey, you villagers! are you going to let the Nazis blow up this bridge of ours? This is the only way we can get to the railway. Don't you remember the bribes we had to pay the Podestà and our deputy and the gentlemen in the Public Works office before this bridge was built?" Why weren't the people organised into guerillas or partisans? Why didn't they arrest the Fascists all over Italy? Why didn't they conspire with the Italian troops to take airfields where Allied airborne troops could land and bring help?

What was the reason for all this—for the "apathy" of the Italian people?

For some two weeks we were angry with the Italians. And then we went on thinking and reading our newspapers. The whole thing became clear. The King's Italy did not trust the People's Italy. The people were not told. Naturally they weren't told, since the King and Badoglio did not trust the scum. And while an Italian general (and not the scum) betrayed the surrender

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to the Germans, the people heard one day that they had "surrendered". They had no arms. They made no preparations. The King's Italy, even after surrender was announced, did not arm the workers, did not change the hated officers commanding the regiments. Is it any wonder that the troops, who had known their commanders as good Fascists for twenty years, did not follow them when they suddenly said that they were anti-Fascists?

No, we cannot blame the Italian people.

But we can profit from their bitter experience.

Here we are, at the end of December 1943, in the country of our lords. Everything points to the fact that our lords would like to follow the example of the Italian lords. They want to save their skins too.

The difference between Italy and Hungary is that we have had no Mussolini: there is nobody whom our lords can point out and say: "He was responsible. Now we have arrested him, proving that we are 'good', that we are on the Allied side." There has been a feudal-Fascist dictatorship in Hungary since their Szeged counter-revolution, but *their rule was not the dictatorship of one person but that of the "régime"*.

But the "régime" cannot arrest itself. It must change some people, it must make itself secure against us and then "work its passage home".

That curious "liberty period" of ours continued during the second half of 1943. The Horthy–Bethlen–Kállay set exploited the existence of the People's Front, of Trade Unions and of Jewish representatives in the House of Lords in the best possible way in their dealings with the Allies. After the Italian surrender (but before it was evident that the lords' Italy too had to pay a price), they even grew daring towards the Hitler-Germans. The Prime Minister and some of the Cabinet Ministers suddenly discovered that they had liberal sympathies, and said so. They even permitted parliamentary demonstrations against the war and for democracy. The budget debate in November and December 1943 once again reminded us of the "shooting dance". The General Staff, the Extreme Right and some of the "yes-men" deputies of the government party almost revolted against the government, and the Horthy–Bethlen–Kállay set had to form a "Right Front" against the People's Front.

The régime had one great difficulty. How to bring it about that *the "left" should exist only as a weapon of propaganda in any dealings with the Western Allies, without endangering inside the country the future of the régime*. The "left" was necessary for their diplomatic game, and deadly dangerous to home policy.

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And some people on the "left" (not all by far) refused the rôle of a safe instrument "for external use only".

Meanwhile Hitler was watching, and our lords did not want him to occupy Hungary. In this—curiously enough—they had the backing of their opposition, which did not want German occupation either. The leaders of the Jews, and some leaders of the "democratic" opposition, very rightly said that *if Kállay provoked the Germans into occupying Hungary, then they would be killed or interned.*

But other opposition leaders believed differently.

Charles Peyer, leader of the Social Democratic Party, who had signed the ominous treaty with Count Bethlen in 1921, very courageously repudiated this treaty and attacked the régime during the budget debate. We must give him credit for saying in December 1943, within Hitler's European fortress, that he was against the war, that Hungarian troops should be recalled from the front, and that Hungary should conclude peace. He also attacked the government for not carrying out a land reform programme and for the way in which land taken away from the Jews had been given to other people.

"We are interested in the question of land reform. The Prime Minister ought to instruct the proper authorities to publish the list of people who have received land, starting with Cabinet Ministers, their relatives, Under-Secretaries of State, generals and Members of Parliament. The list should go on like this down the scale of public functionaries, and it should also contain the names of propertyless land-workers who received land.

"This war is said to be an ideological fight against Bolshevism. The Hungarian peasant in the village of Kiskunhalas will find it hard to understand why Ribbentrop was in Moscow before Eden and concluded a pact with Bolshevism, which must be annihilated. They want us to believe that we must defend our frontiers thousands of miles away from our frontiers. I do not agree with this. The present war is not solely an ideological war. It has ideological and other aspects. We have no territorial claims against our enemies—only against our Allies, the Rumanians, Slovaks and Germans. . . . We have nothing to do with this war. The government said that our eternal pact of friendship with Yugoslavia was not valid because Yugoslavia ceased to exist. Then why not act on this same basis so far as the Tripartite Pact was concerned, when Italy left the Axis?

"I am against the present war. I was against it from the very beginning. The government sacrificed under-equipped and unequipped troops on the Eastern Front. The C.-in-C. of the Second

Hungarian army, in his order of 24th February 1943, said that 'troops were sent to fight on empty stomachs, with only ten bullets each'. Who is responsible for all this? What will happen to our troops on the front, what will happen to our cities, what will happen to us?

"WE WANT PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND THE LIQUIDATION OF THE PRESENT RÉGIME."

A few days after this speech we heard that Peyer had been accused by a Military Court of high treason and his parliamentary immunity suspended.

Now we are thinking of the future.

It is obvious that the régime would like to follow the Italian example. But what can they do? Here is old Admiral Horthy, Regent of Hungary. His position is similar to that of the Italian king. A big part of the "reactionary two millions" could be moved only by Horthy. Even he would have some difficulty with these people, because for the last twenty-three years patriotism has meant to them loyalty to the anti-Semitic, Fascist, anti-democratic régime. Horthy and his friends, with Count Bethlen in the van, naturally do not even pretend to be good patriots or idealists. They would not mind risking the lives of several hundred thousand of us if they were sure that they could thereby preserve their rule, the feudal land system, and would not have to answer for their past crimes. But Horthy would make an anti-Nazi turn only if the Anglo-Saxon troops were nearer than the Russians.

The Extreme Right and the General Staff would turn against Horthy if he tried to imitate Badoglio.

What about the government?

It is partly the heritage of Austro-Hungarian days and partly the result of twenty-three years of camouflaged dictatorship that everything seems to happen with the knowledge and permission of the government. The open and legal opposition existed mostly with government permission, eighty per cent of the M.P.s received their seats at the hands of the government, and so all the governments of our lords are used to conducting their various manœuvres in external and internal politics in such a way that they are not responsible for them. The manœuvres are camouflaged as opposition or individual acts. A government which is really not responsible to people or parliament and which, on top of this, has a twenty-three-year-old tradition of operating through irresponsible channels, cannot be expected to take a firm and responsible line in such a difficult situation as the present one.

Our lords are no realists. Their history proves how short-

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OCC sighted they have always been, even from their own standpoint. Let us take, for instance, the Premier, Miklós Kalláy. He is a county squire whose only political experience, prior to 1914, was in playing petty personal intrigues in local county politics. He belonged to the Horthy–Bethlen–Gömbös clique, so he became Cabinet Minister and then Premier. For him politics are largely personal intrigue, and diplomacy means for him the clever playing-off of various governments against each other. By reason of his upbringing, education, environment and experience he cannot be expected to grasp the present situation and realise fully that the age of chessboard politics and "clever diplomacy" has passed.

He has his prejudices. Some things are confusing. Was Darlan treated well? A good thing. Was he killed later on? A bad thing. The British send a mission to Tito? A horrible thing. Badoglio is still ruling? A good thing. The Moscow and Teheran conferences are bad, but the travels of Cardinal Spellman might be hopeful. The Poles turn against the Soviet? A good thing. Otto of Habsburg makes a speech in America? A still better thing. General Smuts makes a frank statement? How awful! . . .

We cannot expect this confused man, whose only worry is to save the régime, to see clearly and act firmly. He will always believe some important secret information, he will always look at details, instead of seeing the simple and plain truth: that he and his friends led their Hungary into a catastrophic situation and cannot now do anything.

So far as we are concerned, most of our real leaders say that if our lords imitated Badoglio we ought to help them in their fight against the Nazis—if they let us help them. But many of us think that they won't. Of course we would prefer to fight against Hitler and our lords at the same time.

At present we do not clearly see how people in the West imagine the form that the end of the war will take. The democratic West demands three things: 1. The unconditional surrender of Nazi–Fascist or satellite armies. 2. The abdication of the Nazi–Fascist régimes. 3. The maintenance of law and order.

During December 1943 we spent long evenings and nights trying to figure this out. Does the West think that we can stage a revolution against a big army, police force and gendarmerie *and against the armed might of Hitler's divisions*? Does the West think that we can stage a successful mutiny in the army, starting the same day that the unarmed and underfed masses make their successful revolution against police, auxiliary police, gendarmerie

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and the anti-revolutionary para-military detachments of our lords? And even if we succeed in this utterly impossible undertaking, can we produce overnight ten thousand good officers instead of those against whom we mutinied? And again, can this new officer corps produce a disciplined army overnight? And lastly, after performing all these miracles, have we a chance against Hitler's army, which after all has not been completely beaten yet by the combined Russo-Anglo-American might?

We naturally came to the conclusion that the West does not expect us to perform this series of miracles. Most of Hungary is as flat as a pancake. Only in the north and the west do we have mountains. We cannot even start guerilla or partisan warfare. The West knows this too.

Well then, does the West suppose that the very same régime which is expected to abdicate will first force its army to surrender unconditionally and then hand over power to us? This presupposes that the Nazi–Fascist régime consists of good patriots who are willing to enter into a grand conspiracy with the people to save the fatherland. But in that case the régime would not be Nazi–Fascist.

And anyway, the first two demands of the West envisage the disappearance of the military and civic authority. How, then, can law and order be maintained?

Of course we see the difficulties. A fighting army cannot have a revolution in its rear. On the other hand, we cannot stage a revolt before the Allied armies reach us. It seems as if nothing but a great conspiracy can help. If the Allies would enter into a conspiracy with *us*, we might succeed. But at present there are no signs of such a conspiracy.

CHAPTER XVII

Now you have heard our story you have some idea of how we live. We told you about our worries.

By the time you read this it will probably be too late. But perhaps for some learned men it will be interesting to know our worries during the last months of 1943, how we felt about the coming peace, and what our lords did to keep us inactive.

For us, it is good to talk about it. Otherwise we see no earthly use in crying over spilt milk. (Some learned gentleman would call it "creative analysis of past mistakes".) The scientists and

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writers, it seems to us, are like the poor relation in a rich peasant's home. She is generally a widow or an old maid. She has had a lot of experience. She would run the household very well—if she were permitted to run it. She is the one who warns the wife—the chief of the household—"Don't do this or that, it will cause trouble". And it *does* cause trouble. She is always right and she is never permitted to run the household. She—like all the wonderful intellectuals—always profits by past experience. Events invariably prove her foresight and wisdom and she is invariably forbidden to direct the household.

Our intellectuals always warned our lords: don't do this or that, because catastrophe will be the result. Catastrophe was the result. Our lords went on ruling and our intellectuals went on grumbling.

Well, let us talk about our present, that present which will be—we fear—spilt milk by the time you read this.

Kállay, when he became premier, promised that "after this war the Hungarian serfs will be liberated". At that time those gentlemen who were more pro-Nazi than Kállay threatened his position. All the big landlords and industrialists were afraid that the many hundreds of thousands of Germans living in the country of our lords would help the pro-Nazi professional army officers and N.C.O.s and the White Terrorist thugs to stir up revolution and take over the rule. So Kállay and his landowner and industrialist friends discovered us, workers of factories and estates, and started to be nice to us.

Now they no longer fear the Nazis and the Allies. They know that the Nazis will be beaten and they tell us that the Allies will let them rule us after the war. So they are turning against us again.

Recently they organised a huge auxiliary police force against *internal enemies*. Regent Horthy's White Terrorist friends organised the National Defenders' Alliance—fifteen thousand strong—against *internal* enemies. The gendarmerie recruited new men, trustworthy sons of big peasants, whom they pay well because the gendarmerie has to safeguard the country against *internal enemies*. The big Jewish industrialists organised a secret legion of former Jewish officers and the sons of Jewish middle and upper classes against *internal enemies*.

Is it necessary to point out who the internal enemies are? They must be many in a country of fourteen million if, in addition to the army, you need almost a million others to fight them.

Our lords are convinced that if they succeed in keeping law

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and order the Anglo-American military government will let them rule us. Our lords send organisers of the government party to spread the good news that Counts Bethlen, Sigray, Pallavicini and the rest are very popular with the Allies.

The agents of the government party go about the villages and *pusztas* saying that the victorious Allies will not permit us—dirty red swine—to demand land reform, and that anyway the Allies are fighting for the good old pre-war days which for us meant the rule of Count Bethlen, evictions, torture at gendarmerie headquarters; which meant for us going hungry and being humiliated.

We hate the Nazis like poison. We hate the Nazi-Fascists because they are against us and for the big landowners and industrialists. We hate the Nazi-Fascists because under their rule we should go on being slaves and serfs. But we cannot see any difference between the Nazi-Fascists and our lords.

The lords tell us that in the interests of the "nation" we must serve them, keep quiet and fight for them. This is precisely what Hitler told the Germans and Mussolini the Italians.

We should like to fight the Nazi-Fascists—BUT ALL OF THEM, HITLER AND HORTHY, GOERING AND KÁLLAY, PAPEN AND BETHLEN ALIKE.

Life, our life, is not worth living now. We are hungry and desperate. The huge and cleverly organised army, the police, the gendarmerie, legions of political detectives and government spies are against us. The worker's and land-worker's Gestapo is in our midst. Hungary is a big prison for us. The guards have dive-bombers, machine-guns and hand-grenades. We have not even shot-guns. And from time to time we are driven out by our guards to fight for them. Would they drive us out to fight against the German Nazis? We doubt it. We should fight well if they would.

But our lords hate us just as much as we hate them. When the French Government evacuated Paris and had their first Cabinet meeting in Tours, General Weygand said he could not go on fighting the Germans because he needed his reserves to fight *internal enemies*. Pétain and Weygand were more afraid of the French people than of Hitler's divisions. It is the same with our lords.

It is cold now. We—all the workers of factories, estates, workshops—sit about in cold rooms. We are hungry and discouraged. About a hundred thousand of us are out in the East. Our leaders are anxious and nervous. They still say that we must think. We must think clearly and effectively. We must understand well this confusing situation. Our only chance of salvation is to understand and to think, to be firm and enthusiastic.

But we are worn out and confused. You know our history. You

know that we inherited a great weariness. We inherited hopelessness. War widows and orphans are in our midst by the hundred thousand. They are the orphans and widows of a fight *against* our interests and our future. We shall be punished because we were driven like cattle into the war of our lords against our Yugoslav and Russian brethren. They probably hate and despise us. Our lords are armed to the teeth against us. Those men who can talk hope into us, who can awaken us to action, are mostly in prison or abroad.

Go ahead and punish us.

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[For an account of the social history of Hungary from the ninth to the twentieth century, see category 116, pp. 36-97]

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[For a picture of the early years of the Second World War as it appeared to the peasant of Hungary, see category 116, pp. 132-155]

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[For a description of the relationship between master and serf as viewed by the peasantry, see category 116, entire source]